Flying Snake

A journal of Cryptozoology, Folklore and Forteana

May 2021 Volume 7 number 20

Falls of Frogs and Toads . Bees at Funerals . UK Fire balls . Strange fish on a chair . Camels in Australia and America . Yellow King Penguin. And More!

Flying Snake appears about twice a year depending on the time I can find to research for items to include in it and whether or not I have recovered from dancing `The Poot` at Macclesfield`s clubs and pubs. Cover price is £3.99, £ 12 for 3 issues, please send a check for £3.99 etc to Richard Muirhead NOT Flying Snake, to:

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Contributions on all obscure aspects of cryptozoology, Forteana & folklore welcome at Editor`s say-so.

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Essays extoling the occult,racism,sexism will never be consid-ered. Photocopies of previous articles available at author`s and my discretion.

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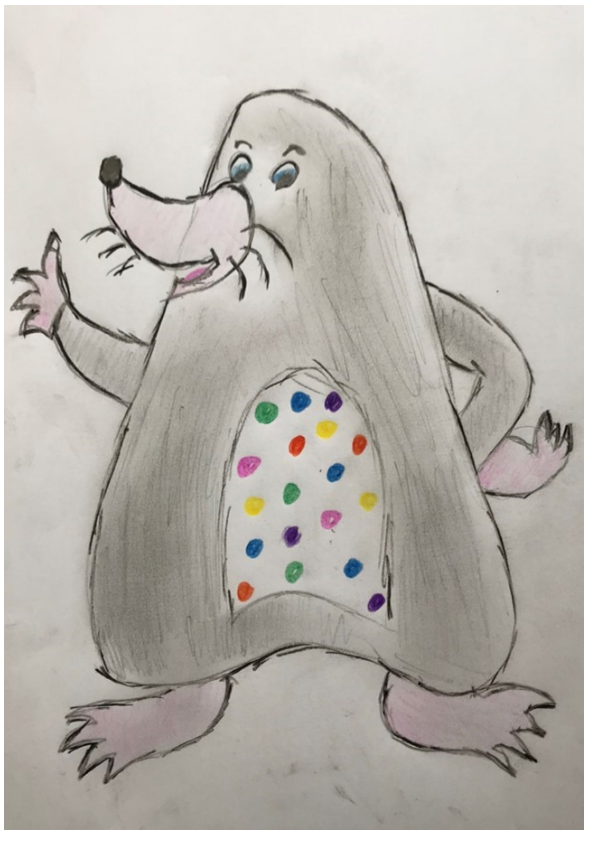
Dr Devo`s Diary

Well here we are again with another exciting edition of your favourite crypto-zoological/Fortean/folklore magazine and I am very pleased to say that Flying Snake has been going for 10 years now, with this issue number 20.That averages at about two issues per year since 2011. My family kindly provided an extensive collection of art work to commemorate these last ten years, examples of which are below; more will appear towards the end of this year in issue 21.This one immediately below is one of my favourites, by brother Bill, an amusing rendition on the theme of singing worms My own personal favourite stories from issues 1-19 of Flying Snake are as follows:Flying Snake

1: Unknown flying lizards in Australia 2: Spotted otter in Ireland.3:Tiny footballers,Ballyroan,Ireland 4:Taking the time from cat`s eyes.5:Strange insects fall in Bath,1871 6: Snake with ears,USA 7:Skin of a Steller`s Sea Cow 8:Toad with wings,USA 9: Flying snake in Scotland 10:Talking cat in Germany 11:Living mastodon in Borneo 12: Tame dragon,Norway,13th century 13:Black triton(a kind of salamander) Somerset 14:Mystery weasel in Hampshire 15:Horned cat in Oregon. 16: Giant owl in Lancashire 17:Red tigers in India 18:Weird jumping porcupine thing 19:An intelligent computer



I hope I`m still here in 2031 to celebrate another twenty issues of Flying Snake!To the left, a spotted mole by my sister-in-law Jane.

AN UNUSUAL MOTH SIGHTING FROM COUNTY DURHAM

RICHARD GEORGE

This is from an account of a ghostly pit pony in Dennis Bardens's 1965 book *Ghosts and Hauntings* (p.237f.) What concerns us is not the ghost itself but an incidental detail:

"From an old miner, Mr .T. Gibbon, of Kepier House Hostel, Gilesgate Moor, Durham, I have the following very clear recollection…

"The year was 1919… This particular incident took place in a worked-out coal seam… On New Year's Eve I went to work as usual at about 9.30 p.m…. I got my gunnie [lamp] and went down… When I got to the pump house I sat down for a breather, but I had only sat down for a few seconds when I saw a large moth flying around. I had a good look at it and discovered it to be a Death's Head Moth. I tried to knock it down with my cloth cap, and missed it, and after chasing it for about five yards I got tired of it and sat down to get my wind..."

"In return to further queries", writes Bardens, "Mr. Gibbon filled in a few further details. The mine in which he saw the ghost was Littleburn Colliery, County Durham… The colour of the Death's Head Hawk Moth was "grey to buff"…

Later Bardens comments:

"The reference made by my informant, Mr. Gibbon, to the Death's Head Hawk Moth is interesting, because there is in Yorkshire a long-standing belief that night-flying moths are the souls of the departed..."

Bardens repeats this narrative, in shorter form, in his 1987 book *Psychic Animals* (p.125f.)

According to the website butterfly-conservation.org, the Death's Head Hawk Moth is a scarce late summer and autumn visitor, mostly to south and east England, although it has been recorded as far north as Shetland. It is not able to survive our winters.

It is most commonly found where potatoes are grown, in gardens and allotments. As a young girl, in the Forties, my mother encountered one in a neighbour's overgrown garden in Birkenhead. A mine working at any time of the year, let alone in the middle of winter, is a very odd place to see one.

But assuming the flying creature was not a zooform or spectre of some kind, what else could it have been ? A bird ? A bat ? It would have been too small, surely.

On the other hand, if it was *Acherontia atropo*s, this was a very unusual sighting of this species. Has the Death's Head Hawk Moth wintered in the U.K., unknown to lepidopterists ?

A RHEA-GUARD ACTION?

Richard George

It's not often Hertfordshire cryptozoology erupts into the mainstream media. But on Friday evening, March 26 (2021), the BBC and Sky News informed us that up to twenty South American rheas were causing trouble in Maple Cross (1). My first reaction was to look the location up, as I couldn't place it off hand, and my second was to think "Twenty ??"

On Maple Cross, first of all: it's a curious little place, just off the M25 at the very south-west corner of Herts, in the middle of not quite nowhere, surrounded by open fields. It's the village equivalent of a New Town – a few old cottages supplemented by a large modern estate. The rheas were believed to be wild, or feral, and to be attacking dogs. It's more likely they were defending themselves: after all, if you're dainty, with long legs, and you feel intimidated by

something resembling a pit bull… what do you expect ?

Before long even Fox News got in on the act, calling the rheas "Road Runners", which they are not, and categorising this story under "Lifestyle" (2). *Cryptozoology is not a fashion accessory* !

The following Monday, there was an update courtesy of whatsnew2day. Apparently the rheas had been causing a nuisance in residential *areas* near the M25 for the previous *two weeks* (3). A second location, Croxley Green, was mentioned. This is quite a lot larger than Maple Cross

and a little to the north. However, one bird was believed to have escaped from its owner about a year before, and had been christened Chris, after the lugubrious-voiced crooner… Chris Rea ! Chris Rea wrote and sang *The Road To Hell* about… the M25 ! Is this a lexi-link, or what ?

More importantly, where have all the other rheas come from ? (I've been trying to think up a Collective Noun for rheas, and failing). Strangely, there are very few records of escaped rhea on the NBN Atlas list – only two – and neither from Hertfordshire (4). Maple Cross is very close to one of the county's hottest spots for bird watching, Stocker's Lake just south of Rickmansworth. No rhea sightings there, apparently.

Rheas did escape at the other end of Hertfordshire a while ago, around the villages of Anstey, Barkway and Brent Pelham in the extreme north-east of the county (5). In May 2014 a single bird was shot: in January 2015 two or three were seen in the same area, having absconded from a property just over the border in Essex. Could these birds have travelled south and west to Maple Cross ? It's not impossible, but unlikely.

But a spot of research reveals the Maple Cross rheas have not simply teleported into Metroland. In April last year (2020), "birdmanuk" on Twitter posted a photo of a rhea taken very near Maple Cross (6). Intriguingly, it appeared to be partly albino. One reply was "There's a lot in fields by the Chiltern Museum", another that rheas were kept in a field at the back of the Dumb Bell in Horn Hill (very close to Maple Cross). Now let us turn to the Chalfonts, two genteel-sounding settlements on the other side of the M25. In October 2020 the local chapter of the University of the Third Age (which sounds rather sinister – I always associate the term "chapter" with the Hell's Angels) wrote in their internet periodical "The rhea… have been seen by many walkers recently in our local fields" (7). "Have been seen" is, of course, plural. And then, in January this year (2021), a single rhea near Chalfont St.Peter took a bow on Youtube (8). There is even one sighting just outside Maple Cross dating back five years (9).

So where have they escaped from specifically ? Two farms close to Maple Cross apparently own rheas, Nathan's Farm and Cassiobury Farm and Fishery. Add to these whoever owns the rheas at Horn Hill and you have three potential sources. There may be more.

Now, a few weeks on, the story has gone stone cold. Where are the rheas now ? Have they been caught ? Were there ever as many as 20 ? Strange. There was a coda, though: one Maple Cross resident claimed there

was only ever the one rhea, the aforementioned Chris (10). This cannot be true, as I have seen Youtube footage of two of these rheas together (11).

In Germany, meanwhile, rheas have proved even more efficient at escaping and multiplying. In the late 1990s, 15 or 20 went AWOL from a holding near Lubeck. There are now, apparently over 500 (12). If you want to know how this could happen, here is a quote from Gerald Durrell's marvellous book about Patagonia, *The Whispering Land*:

These rheas...have communal nests, that is to say several females lay their eggs in one nest. This is a mere scrape in the ground… and you can find as many as fifty eggs in one nest… (13).

Rheas, obviously, are not a native species here, and the South American predators of their eggs and young are absent…

You may have noticed a theme recurring from my St. Albans Big Cat article – the presence of motorways (in this case the M25). When one of these cuts through a rural landscape, the result is odd. Open fields, not much there… and then all these cars and lorries barrelling through. It's not really countryside any more: it's nowhere-land, liminal. Fertile territory for cryptids, colonising by a kind of "ribbon development" ?

This enclave of south-west Hertfordshire certainly seems to be fertile territory for rheas. They favour open grassland, and the "agri-desert" created by many farmers today could be ideal for them. In fifty years' time, will the rhea be naturalized in southern England, like the Ring-Necked Parakeet ? You heard it first here, folks…

As Chris Rea lugubriously sang:

Fool if you think it's over…
it's just begun…

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(13) Gerald Durrell, *The Whispering Land* (1961), p.98.

A BIRD BATTLE IN THE 20TH CENTURY

Natale Guido Cinncinati

The fact that animals allegedly wage war against each other and fight out real battles has been the subject of tradition since antiquity. There are numerous examples of this in historical documents, but also in legends and fairy tales. The famous German collector of fairy tales and legends Ludwig Bechstein (1801-1860), for example, reproduces an incident from the 16th century in which thousands of waterfowl killed each other.(1) This happened at the beginning of December 1587 in Wichitsch (now Bihać, Bosnia and Herzegovina). On 3 and 4 December, huge flocks of birds, including geese and ducks, gathered over the city. Hundreds of thousands of them are said to have landed on the river Una, causing the river to overflow its banks. On the night of 5 December, very loud cries of birds were heard, "*resounding throughout the area*". In the morning, the birds rose into the air and aggressively hacked at each other with their beaks until most of the birds fell to the ground or into the water, dead or injured. Soldiers, citizens and farmers collected many of the dead birds for consumption. Three days after the bird battle, the remaining birds rose into the air above a meadow and flew away.

Since the early modern period at the latest, many of these animal battles have been seen as a meaningful prodigy (fig. 1). From the perspective of fortean zoology, or cryptoethology,(2) the question arises as to the authenticity of such reports and possible explanations.

There are only a small number of reports of animal battles from the 20th century.(3) All the more remarkable, therefore, are all the more recent indications of this phenomenon, which undoubtedly presupposes a large number of individuals of one species, something that is increasingly rare on our so overpopulated planet.In the October/November 1948 issue of the popular German science magazine *KOSMOS*, a Doctor L. reports an interesting observation he made during his stay in Turkey in the 1930s.(4) Initially guided only by his medical interests, the reporter increasingly enjoyed the great abundance of large and small birds, especially the "*grave storks, which amazed us by their great numbers*" (fig. 2). As Dr L. drives along the Aegean coast from Smyrna (now Izmir) to the ancient city of Pergamon (now Bergama), he notices "*numerous damaged, disfigured storks*" in the area behind Menemen. Dr L. reports:

THE
WONDERFVLL
Battell of STARELINGS:
Fought at the Citie of *Corke* in *Ireland*, the 12.
and 14. of October last past. 1621.

As it hath been credibly enformed by diuers Noble-men, and others of the said Kingdome, &c.

LONDON,
Printed for N.B. 1622.

Fig.1: Title page of the anonymously written, nine-page pamphlet *The Wonder-full Battell of Starelings: Fought at the Citie of Corke in Ireland, the 12. and 14. of October last past 1621* (London 1622), describing a fight between starlings

„What's going on, I asked the companions from Syrna? ‚These are war victims, from the battle between the storks and the eagles.' I said they were fairy tales from the Arabian Nights. No, that was truth. Shortly before, around 1933, a battle between these birds had taken place there for several days in the spring – and the storks had won. These were wounded at the time and are waiting here invalid for the future. This seemed rather strange to us, but a few weeks later the mayor of Cukuk near Ankara confirmed to us that shortly before, the numerous old storks had flown away, summoned together by a black stork, even though the young ones had not yet fledged and were clattering miserably after their old ones. This stood out with the well-known family love of the storks and one concluded that a special event had called the old ones away. The Turkish farmers then fed the young storks with the entrails of sheep etc. until they were fledged or the old ones 'came back from the war'. Even the government in Ankara had taken note and given the advice of such artificial feeding“.

Fig. 2: A majestic white stork (*Ciconia ciconia*) in the Mönchengladbach Zoo, May 2016 (Foto N.G. Cincinnati)

Dr L. was able to find out about the actual stork-eagle-battle "*that it lasted almost a week, that probably about 10,000 storks fought against the eagles in the area of Smyrna, Mythilene, Troy and that many storks died in the process. But in the end, it was explained, the storks found out who the leader of the eagles was, and the stork community pounced on him and killed him. This then prompted the Eagles to withdraw. The dispute arose because the eagles attacked and killed a stork. The special role of the 'black storks' was also confirmed several times and their leadership among the white storks emphasised*".

Even if the rapporteur, Dr L., almost exclusively (except for the observation of the injured storks at Menemen) uses the anecdotal method of nature writing(5), and even if the anthropomorphisation of the eagles and storks by the Turkish observers may meet with rejection today, the independent confirmations – also from official sources – nevertheless point to an actual incident. Dr L. also sums up:

„*I think this is a fact that cannot well be passed by because, as I said, it has been confirmed by various quarters. In any case, the invalid storks of Nemenem* [sic] *have not been injured and disfigured by humans. Everyone respects them in their asylum there and pities them*"
.The extent to which the incident took place, how it can be explained in terms of behavioural biology and why such incidents were and are reported so rarely, would of course still have to be answered. Moreover, the socio-cultural perspective must not be disregarded in such questions, since incidents of this kind, as mentioned at the beginning, were often interpreted as omens. In the 1930s, Turkey was in the throes of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's far-reaching reforms. Even though the majority of Atatürk's reforms were successfully implemented, there was resistance from traditionalist and Kurdish forces, which were put down militarily. But whether these social changes and tensions or the fear of an intra-Turkish war had a decisive influence on the interpretation of a natural event as well as its observation and reporting must remain an open question. So what remains in the end is a more or less well-documented reference to an unusual animal behaviour that can be placed in the context of many other incidents of this kind.

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1. Bechstein 1841, pp. 179-180.
2. Cf. Cincinnati 2016, p. 33.
3. Michell/Rickard 1983, pp. 283-288.
4. L. 1948, p. 322.
5. Cf. Lane 1948, p. VII.

LONGER SURVIVAL OF STELLER`S SEA COW ON THE KAMCHATKA PENINSULA?

Ulrich Magin

According to accepted zoological wisdom, the last specimen of Steller's Sea Cow was killed in 1768 (Akimuschkin, p. 52)

However, there is a previously unnoticed reference to the animal, in the book of the sailor Heinrich Zimmermann from Wiesloch, from the Palatinate in Germany, who accompanied Captain Cook on his last voyage. (He took notes secretly, as all reporting on the journey was prohibited, and published his notes in form of an entertaining and highly readable book when he returned to his homeland.)

In 1778, Cook's ships closed in on the Asian coast near Bering Island, a Russian territory of the Aleutian Islands where the sea cow had been discovered and exterminated.

Zimmermann writes (on p. 68):

"On August 9th, we landed at 65 degrees north latitude on the reported Asian coast. The inhabitants there are very similar to the Americans described above; only they are of a somewhat browner and darker complexion, they gathered in great numbers with bows and arrows on the coast. In spite of this, Mr. Cook went to the country all by himself and befriended them with gifts. Their diet consists of fish and especially sea-cows, and they know how to prepare the skin of these as well as any tanner. The commodore gave this country the name Cookstown."

On p. 103 Zimmermann adds on the occasion of a second stay there in 1779: "In the middle of the month of July we arrived at latitude 71 north and encountered ice in abundance and more than before. Here, as had happened last year on this and the American coast, we again shot many sea horses [walrus], sea-cows, and quite a few fur seals, and boiled oil from them. We cruised in every direction, and where we found an opening, we boldly proceeded."

Of course, Captain Cook also kept a journal, and in it he notes his encounter with sea-cows at Kamchatka very matter-of-factly, too.

Describing his stay at the Peninsula, he writes: “The seas and lakes abound with a variety of amphibious animals, of which seals and sea-horses and sea-cows are the most numerous, and the most profitable. Of the skins of the seals they make their canoes, and on their flesh and fat they feed deliciously. Whales are sometimes cast upon the shores, but very seldom, unless wounded.

With the teeth and bones of the sea-horse and sea cow they point their arrows, and weapons of war; and of their fat and blubber they make their oil. They have otters in their lakes, but their skins bear a great price.” (Cook 1781, p. 371)

From this it appears that there was a prominent witness for the survival of Steller’s Sea-Cow for at least 11 years after its alleged extermination, and in larger numbers, very close from what had been thought to be their only habitat – Bering Island.

However, I later discovered that, until c. 1800, the English word sea-cow also commonly meant a walrus (Mowat, p. 29, 30 shows that it was still used in this sense in 1765 and 1798) so that what

Cook was hunting off Kamchatka might have been walrus. It is a shame that both Zimmermann and Cook did not describe but simply name the hunted animal. It must have been nothing special for them. I resigned that what both were talking about was walrus, until I re-read both sources more closely.

Cook does mention sea-cows only once, all other references to cows are to terrestrial ones (Cook 1781, p. 122, 345, 347, 348), and he does not ever mention walrus. In contrast, Zimmerman says they also hunted “Seerosse” on Kamchatka, which is an alternative form of Walross, the German word commonly used for walrus (it translates as whale-horse, which is also the origin of the English walrus, and Seeross simply translates as marine horse). That is, Zimmermann documents walrus and sea-cows in the same sentence, and checking Cook again, I noticed he did exactly the same: “sea-horses and sea-cows are the most numerous”. So their sea-cow cannot have been walrus unless their sea-horses were not walrus, which I doubt.

While doubt still lingers, there is the true chance that Steller’s Sea-Cow outlived other individuals of its species on the Kamchatka coast (in a very large geographical area, from at least 65 to 71 degrees north, and in multitudes, not as a few surviving animals).

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LAKE AND WATER CRYPTIDS OF TENNESSEE

by Kate Shaw of Strange Animals Podcast

(strangeanimalspodcast.blubrry.net)

Tennessee doesn't have the exciting cryptids that other regions of North America can claim, like Sasquatch or Champ. We do have a lot of waterways, though, with some interesting associated weirdness.

Tennessee is in the southeastern United States, a long thin state divided into three geographical sections. East Tennessee borders the southern Appalachian Mountains, Middle Tennessee is on the Cumberland Plateau, and West Tennessee borders the Mississippi River. The only natural lake in the state is Reelfoot in northwestern Tennessee, a shallow, swampy body of water formed in the early 19th century.

Before 1811, instead of a lake a small river flowed through the area, a tributary of the Mississippi. (In earlier accounts, Reelfoot River is called Red Foot River.) Most of the residents of the area at the time were Choctaw, although white settlers lived in the small town of New Madrid near the bank of the Mississippi.

From December 1811 through February 1812, a series of earthquakes in the New Madrid Seismic Zone changed the land radically. There were three main quakes and innumerable smaller ones, ranging from an estimated 6.7 for the smallest quake to a possible 8.8 for the largest.

In the initial quake and aftershocks on 16 December 1811, chimneys collapsed, trees fell, and fissures opened and closed, projecting water or sand high in the air. Boats on the Mississippi capsized as huge waves crashed from bank to bank.

A woman named Eliza Bryan, who lived in New Madrid, wrote an account of the quakes:

> On the 16th of December, 1811, about 2 o'clock a.m., a violent shock of earthquake, accompanied by a very awful noise, resembling loud but distant thunder, but hoarse and vibrating, followed by complete saturation of the atmosphere with sulphurous vapor, causing total darkness. The screams of the inhabitants, the cries of the fowls and beasts of every species, the falling trees, and the roaring of the Mississippi, the current of which was retrograde for a few minutes, owing, as it is supposed, to an eruption in its bed, formed a scene truly horrible.
>
> From this time on until the 4th of February the earth was in continual agitation, visibly waving as a gentle sea. On that day there was another shock… and on the 7th, at about 4 o'clock a.m., a concussion took place so much more violent than those preceding it that it is denominated the 'hard shock.'
>
> The Mississippi first seemed to recede from its banks, and its waters gathered up like a mountain… Then, rising 15 or 20 feet perpendicularly and expanding, as it were, at the same time, the banks overflowed with a retrograde current rapid as a torrent.

A riverboat captain reported in another account that his boat was caught in a ferocious current on the Mississippi, crashing across waves he estimated as six feet high [1.8 m]. He also reported whirlpools that he estimated were 30 feet deep [9 m]. He saw all the trees on either bank fall at once. The December quake was so large it was felt across North America, from Canada to the Gulf Coast. Then, only five weeks later, it happened again, followed by the third major earthquake on 7 February. Only 15 miles [24 km] from the epicenter, the

land dropped 20 feet [6 m] and created a basin that immediately filled with water. Reelfoot Lake was formed, Tennessee's only natural lake.

Reelfoot is a state park these days, popular with boaters, fishers, hunters, and birdwatchers. The only cryptid sighting I could find took place in the Glass community near Obion, within ten miles [16 km] of the lake. A man who grew up in Glass reported in 2009 that a bipedal creature 8 or 9 feet tall [2.5-2.7 m] and covered in off-white hair was well-known to the residents of the community. They referred to it as "the white thing." The man had seen it several times as a child and his father, who was initially a skeptic, changed his mind when he found huge tracks in the woods.

Technically, Tennessee has two natural lakes, but the "Lost Sea" is underground. It's located in a large cave system called Craighead Caverns in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains. It's one of the largest underground lakes ever found, although it hasn't been fully explored so its actual size isn't known. The lake doesn't support any known animals, although scientific explorations haven't been conducted as far as I could find. In the 1960s the cave owners stocked the lake with rainbow trout in hopes that they would discover an exit to the surface. They didn't, and the fish have to be fed and restocked since they have no natural food sources and won't spawn in the lake. The cave, and the lake, are a local tourist attraction.

Besides Reelfoot Lake, Tennessee is home to many man-made lakes. Most are in East Tennessee. During the Great Depression, President Roosevelt set up the New Deal plan, creating government-funded projects to employ out-of-work Americans. The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) was founded in 1933 to improve the lives of people who lived along the Tennessee River and its tributaries. To curb seasonal flooding and stop the spread of malaria, and to bring electricity to residents, TVA built numerous hydroelectric dams.

I grew up in a town built in the 1930s to house workers on Norris Dam, which formed Norris Lake from the Clinch River. Norris Dam was TVA's first large project, completed in 1936. This makes the lake only 85 years old, but that's certainly long enough for local lore to grow up around it. As a kid I heard about monster catfish—as big as a VW Beetle—living at the bottom of the spillway. The largest fish ever caught in the lake, however, was a 49.5 pound [22.45 kg] striped bass in 1978. The largest catfish ever caught in Tennessee was a blue catfish that weighed 112 pounds [50.8 kg]. That's huge, but not the size of a car.

Fig 1 Norris Dam © Kate Shaw

Fig 2 Norris Lake © Kate Shaw

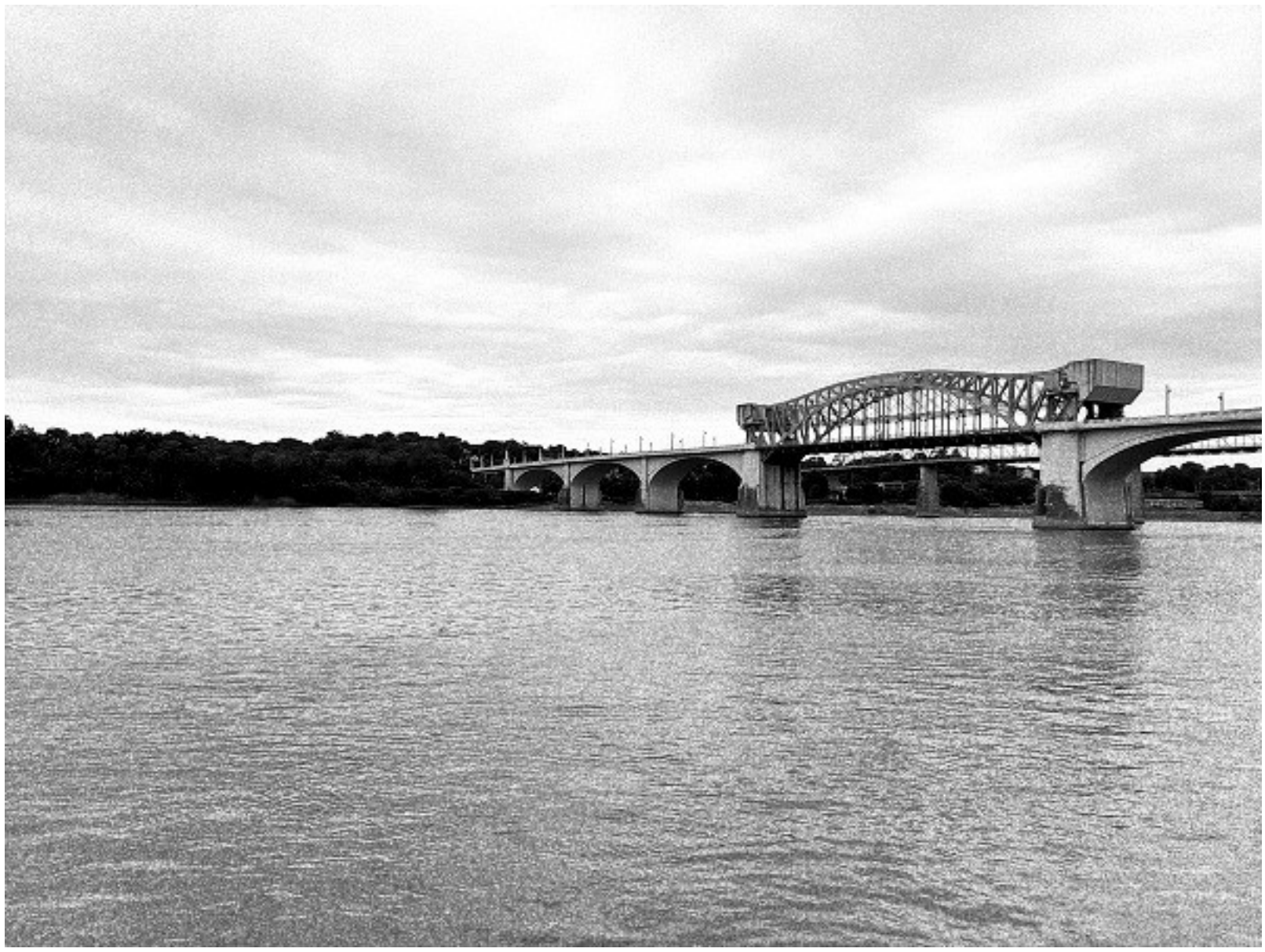

Fig 3 Tennessee River © Kate Shaw

Fig 4 Paddlefish at Tennessee Aquarium in Chattanooga © Kate Shaw

There are other strange reports from around Norris Lake. On the night of 3 March 2012, two men went to a clearing near the first man's house, in a swampy area near the lake's edge, to build a bonfire and talk. They noticed footsteps and the sound of a large animal moving around in the trees nearby but assumed it was a white-tailed deer, although both men did have the sensation of being watched throughout the evening. Around midnight, when the men decided to leave, they heard sticks breaking in the trees as though being stepped on. One of the men knocked on a tree with a piece of wood and heard knocking in response, and then both were frightened by a loud, deep, long growl.

Black bears do occasionally stray into the Norris area from the nearby Smoky Mountains, but black bears don't growl. They make distinctive moaning or chuffing noises instead. They also usually stay away from humans and fire.

In the late 1980s, possibly September of 1988, a woman returning to her car after a day of fishing with her family saw a huge hairy Bigfoot-type figure cross the trail ahead of her at speed. She only caught a quick glimpse of it at dusk but estimated it was 8 or 9 feet tall [2.5-2.7 m] with long arms that swung oddly as it took huge strides.

Other Tennessee lakes have their share of mysteries too. The "catzilla" legend is repeated in just about every waterway, with the catfish's size usually compared to that of a small car. There really are some enormous fish in Tennessee's lakes, though. In January of 2021 a man caught and released an American paddlefish in Cherokee Lake that might have approached the world record weight of 151 pounds [68.5 kg]. It was six feet long [1.8 m].

There's also a 19th century mystery associated with the Tennessee River. The earliest report of it I could find is from April 1878 in the *Chattanooga Daily Times*, an account from an old resident about river monster sightings from earlier that century. The first sighting by a white settler is from 1822, when a man named Buck Sutton was fishing and sighted the monster. The next reported sighting was near the same area five years later, when a man named Billy Burns saw the monster while crossing the ferry. Jim Windom was fishing in 1829 when he saw it. All three men died the summer after their encounters, although subsequent sightings (including 1836 and 1839) didn't lead to anyone's death.

The sightings all apparently took place in a part of the Tennessee River near Chattanooga, now dammed to form Chickamauga Lake. At the time the river there was relatively sluggish and shallow, with many shoals.

The monster was described as serpent-like and about the length of a canoe, or around 20 to 25 feet long [6 to 7.6 m]. At least one report says it had a doglike head. Billy Burns reported that its belly was yellow and its back was blue. The most interesting detail comes from at least two reports, that of a tall black fin on its back that stood at least 18 inches high [45 cm] or possibly two feet high [61 cm] above the water.

The Tennessee River has its share of unusual animals, from tiny freshwater jellyfish to the paddlefish, a filter feeder with an elongated rostrum. In shallow water the tail fins of fish can show above the surface higher than the dorsal fin, but not two feet out of the water. No freshwater fish with such a large and prominent dorsal fin lives in North America.

It's possible that on rare occasions, a bull shark could find its way into the Tennessee River. The Tennessee is a tributary of the Ohio River, which in turns flows into the Mississippi, which then empties into the Gulf of Mexico. While bull sharks do occasionally swim up the Mississippi, no genuine sighting of one in the Ohio or Tennessee rivers has ever been documented. It's not impossible, though. An exceptionally large bull shark can grow up to 13 feet long [4 m], and it prefers shallow water. Tennesseans in the early 19th century would have no knowledge of sharks and might consider it a monster, not an ordinary fish.

However, the sightings specify a snake-like creature, not a fish.

Alligators do occasionally show up in Tennessee. The American alligator can grow up to 15 feet long [4.5 m], but even if one occasionally strayed into the Tennessee River in the 19th century, it has no structure on its back that could be mistaken for a tall fin. It also doesn't match the reports in other ways.

The Tennessee River might once have been home to a large fish with a tall dorsal fin, one that was already rare in the early 19th century and which went extinct soon after. It's also possible that the story was just a newspaper hoax, written to fill space on a slow news day. The article from 1878 was a "contribution…from an old citizen of Chattanooga" who was not named, talking about events that took place more than fifty years before. In 1885 another newspaper, the *Chattanooga Daily Commercial*, ran a nearly identical article—obviously taken from the 1878 one, often word-for-word—that claims the reporter heard the story "yesterday while listening attentively to the conversation of one of Chattanooga's oldest citizens."

We may never know what the strange Tennessee River animal was, just as we may not know whether bigfoot-type creatures live near Tennessee's lakes. I have my doubts that there are catfish in Tennessee bigger than cars, though—but just to be on the safe side, I'm staying in the boat.

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SOME SMALL, SOME GIANT CUTTLEFISH, MAINLY DOWN UNDER

Ulrich Magin

What we today call giant squid was, just 150 years ago, the giant calmary or cuttlefish. Although squid are not really rare, their occurrence on a beach was often reported in local newspapers, and I have selected an assortment of cuttlefish stories from New Zealand newspapers – about the big, the ugly, and the invasion type.

On March 1868, on p. 6, the „Wellington Independent“ reported on a „Lusus Nature“ (a freak, we would say today): „A singular specimen of the cuttlefish kind was lately caught in a net by some fishermen at the Kaiapoi bar, and after being exhibited at the Kaiapoi hotel, is to be removed to Christchurch. Its length over all is about three feet. The head is completely laid by a number of feelers, and has a parrot-shaped beak of the same hard texture. As a protection, the body is shaped like an envelope open at tho end for the better protection of the feelers and head, while its steering apparatus is more akin to a flat, triangular shaped piece of liver than anything else, and with the protection for the body ia in one piece.”The next case is the well-known story of the sinking of the „Pearl“ (which, if I remember correctly, was a hoax). The „Taranaki Herald“ had this piece 3 October 1874, on p 2:„A Vessel Submerged by a Gigantic Cuttle Fish. – The following strange story has been communicated to the Indian papers : –“We left Colombo in the steamer Strathowen, had rounded Galle, and were well in the Bay with our course laid for Madras, steaming over a calm and tranquil sea. About an hoar before sunset on the 10th May, we saw on ou starboard beam, and about two miles off, a small schooner lying becalmed ; there was nothing in her appearance or position to excite remark, bat as we came up with her I lazily examined her with my binocular, and then noticed between us, but nearer her, a long, low swelling, lying on the sea, which, from its colour and shape, I took to be a bank of seaweed. As I watched, the mass hitherto at rest on the quiet sea was set in motion. It struck the schooner, which visibly reeled, and then righted; immediately afterwards the masts swayed sideways, and with my glass I could clearly discern the enormous mass and the hull of the schooner coalescing – I can think of no other term. Judging from their exclamations, the other gazers must have wit-

-nessed the same appearance. Almost immediately after the collision and coalescence the schooner's masts swayed towards as, lower and lower; the vessel was on her beam end, lay there a few seconds, and disappeared, the masts righting as she sank, and the main exhibiting a reversed ensign straggling towards its peak. A cry of horror arose from the lookers-on; and, as if by instinct, our ship's head was at once turned towards the scene, which wan now marked by the forms of those battling for life –the sole survivors of the pretty little schooner, which only twenty minutes before floated bravely on the smooth sea. As soon as the poor fellows were able to tell their story they astounded us with the assertion that their vessel had been submerged by a gigantic cattle fish or calmary, the animal which in a smaller form, attracts so much attention in the Brighton Aquarium as the octopus. Each narrator had his version of the story; bu, in the main, all the narratives tallied so remarkably as to leave no doubt of the fact.“

The next case is again from New Zealand and reports the stranding of a rather smaller specimen: „A Cephalopodous Mollusc. FOUND AT NEW BRIGHTON. It savours rather of abuse to dub anything a 'cephalopodous mollusc,' but that, we understand, is the name, style, and title under which the family of cuttlefish is known to science. A fine specimen of the tribe was found on the New Brighton beach by Mr Cowper, a Lyttelion Times runner, yesterday morning. The body measures some eighteen inches in length, and the two longer of the ten tentacles more than twenty. Ink enough to print one of Mr Sydney Taiwhanga's noble and instructive orations on the Treaty of Tuaitangi was squeezed out of the creature in the attempt to clean it and render it presentable for the society in the Star composing-room, where its curious form made it the object of close examination and much, discussion to-day” – as the Christchurch “Star” said on 15 August 1888, p. 3.

Several similar news stories like a cuttlefish in dispaly in a local shop or found on a beach, but of small size, which I leave out of this article, show the animal faszinated readers dispite their small size.

In 1900, we talk not about a giant squid, but about a giant number of squids, now closer to Britain. As the “New Zealand Mail” on 25 January 1900, p. 35, has it: “Normandy fishermen are having a very remarkable experience just now. They are the victims of an extraordinary invasion of cuttlefish, nothing similar to which has been seen on the coast since 1839. To such an extent is the sea infested with the cuttlefish that the fishermen often bring up as many

as three or four hundred of them in a single haul of the net."

One year later, a big squid is reported in New Zealand. "A Monster of the deep, in the form of a gigantic cuttlefish, was recently found at Resolution Bay, Blenheim. The length of its body, from tip of tail to root of tentacles, was 9ft 6in, the circumference of its body 6ft, and the length of its tentacles, when extended horizontally, 16ft."(Poverty Bay Herald, 5 August 1901, p. 3) This one is not listed among the Architeuthis strandings in Richard Ellis' book "the Search for the Giant Squid".

The next one is missing in the book as well, but was noted in the "Otago Witness" on 23 February 1916, p. 60: "A cuttlefish, about 10ft Iong, was washed up on the beach at Lyall Bay on the 17th instant, and attracted a great deal of attention (says the Post). It was a fearsome-looking monster, with arms about 3ft or 4ft in length, and a beak like a parrot."

We learn more about this specimen from the Christchurch "Sun" on 19 February 1916, p. 13: "Bathers on the beach at Lyall Bay the other morning received a surprise on parading the beach to discover a huge cuttlefish which had been washed up during the night. The body, which weighed about a hundredweight and a half, was about 10ft long, and a half dozen forbidding looking tentacles, with protruding suckers, were as thick as a man's leg. The bag from which is discharged the inky fluid when attacked, or when making an attack, was visible, and the single eye was also prominent. A fight between a cuttlefish or devil fish, as they are sometimes called, and a whale was described in one of the magazines some time ago. It was witnessed off the decks of a liner, and lasted for nearly an hour, the whale struggling furiously the whole time to disengage itself from the deadly embrace of the cuttlefish, finally both sinking beneath the surface out of view, the whale apparently being the victim, as its struggling had almost ceased before it disappeared."Again not listed in Ellis is another 1916 specimen – which goes to show how much can be found in old newspapers that may refine statistics on unsual or rare animals. The "New Zealand Herald" carried this news story on 30 August 1916, p. 9

"CAPTURE OF CUTTLEFISH – TRAWLER'S UNUSUAL HAUL. LARGE SPECIMEN SECURED. A large cuttlefish was caught by the crew of the trawler Baroona while fishing off Cape Colville on Monday. The specimen was displayed in a shop window in Queen Street yesterday, and attracted the attention of hundreds of passers-by.

The fishermen had an exciting time when the cuttlefish was hauled from the net into the trawler, and its arms, with their rows of 'suckers,' caused not a little apprehension. It was soon killed, however. The tentacles were found to measure 10ft in length, so that with its body, it was over 20ft across. It is considered by experienced fishermen to be one of the largest specimens of the kind caught near Auckland. There are various types of cuttlefish. The larger varieties are to be found In the Atlantic Ocean, near the shores of Newfoundland. A giant cuttlefish of the octopus class was stranded at Cape Campbell, on the north-east coast of the South Island in 1886. The arms of the specimen measured 18ft 10in, and with its body it was 28ft 10in across. At Lyall Bay, Wellington, a case is on record where a cuttlefish of a variety little known in New Zealand waters was caught. It had two tentacles, each measuring 46ft, and eight arms, each measuring 6ft in length. Cuttlefish have repeatedly been caught in and about the vicinity of Cook's Strait, and the dimensions of the larger specimens have varied from 20ft to 35ft across. Not long ago an instance was reported where a child was caught by an octopus at Island Bay, Wellington. The victim was being slowly drawn beneath the surface of the water, and the attempts of the mother to save it proved of no avail. Luckily, a man who was near lent his assistance, and the child was rescued from a terrible death." (The other cases mentioned are both in Ellis.)A new entry for Ellis would also be the next one, from 1926. As the "Gisborne Times" says on 12 March 1926, p. 5: "A cuttlefish measuring 15 feet was washed up dead on the sands at Haughton Bay, Wellington. The big fish is the largest that has yet been seen in that district. It was left for view on the beach, and during the afternoon attracted rather a large crowd, especially children, who played about without fear close to the dead monster."

Add your note to Ellis' list again with the next case, from 1931, also new: "The recent, southerly weather washed a huge cuttlefish with a spread from tentacle to tentacle of twenty feet up on the beach at Pahaua Station on the East Coast, about 30 miles from Martinborough. The girth of the actual body of the repulsive creature was five feet, and the tentacles, studded with great suckers, were ten feet in length. So heavy was it that it took the combined efforts of five men to turn it over in order that measurements might be taken." (Hawera Star, 28 December 1931, p. 4)

Next is a tall story of a class typical at the time, that of the giant octopus or cuttlefish attacking a diver – something, as we now know, just does not hap-

pen in real life. But is was believed back then, and each diver had his tale to tell. As the “Auckland Star” headlined on 13 October 1932, p. 9: “HORROR OF THE DEEP. CUTTLEFISH ATTACKS DIVER. BESIDE SUNKEN SUBMARINE. WHEN COOLNESS IS ESSENTIAL.”The story itself ran: “From deep sea diver to farmer. From groping for sunken wrecks in the dim twilight of forty or fifty fathoms to milking his cows in the early morning with the song of birds as, an accompaniment to the swish of milk in the pails. Such has been the experience of Mr. “Jim” Wilson, a diver of many years’ experience, who is now living id the Auckland district.

Mr. Wilson has done work recently at Arapuni and for the Harbour Board, but, needless to say, this cannot compare for thrills with work in deep water, where there is always danger from the elements, and, still worse, the possibility of being attacked by a giant octopus or gripped by a huge clam–a creature, shaped exactly like the New Zealand scollop, but anything up to 10ft in diameter! Curiously enough, the latter is not greatly feared by the skilled diver, who (provided, of course, his arms are clear) simply proceeds to smash the shell with his axe, but even the hardiest member of the profession shudders when he recalls an experience with the big octopus or cuttlefish.

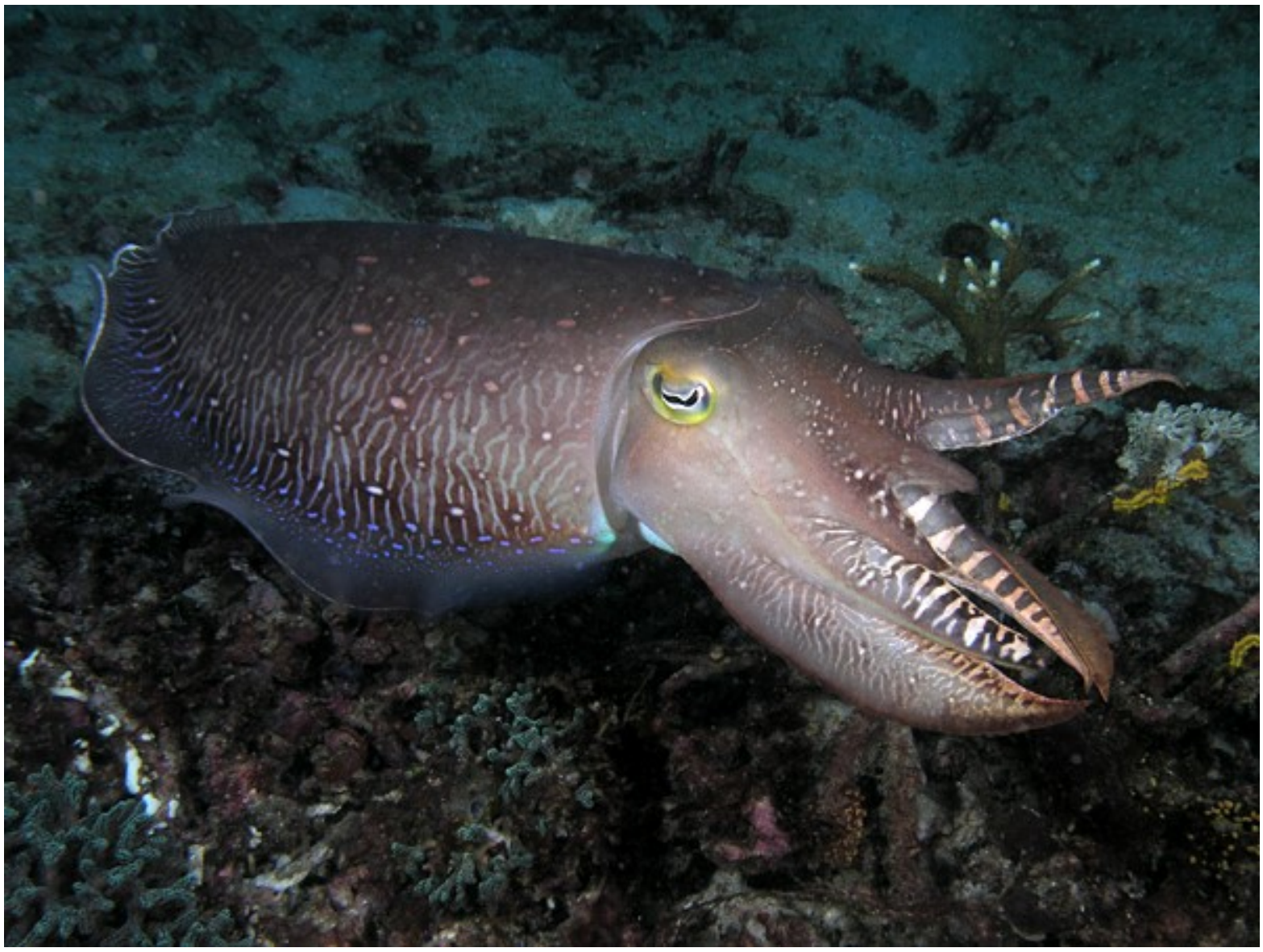
Such an adventure—if anything so nightmarish can possibly be termed an adventure —befell Mr. Wilson soon after the war, when he was diving for the Navy in search for a German submarine sunk in Lough Swilly, a great gulf in the coast of Ireland.

“It was in 47 fathoms of water,” said Mr. Wilson, “and diving conditions at that depth are always a bit tricky, however perfect the weather conditions. I soon found the wreck, and I began to search for a suitable place by which to enter. As I plodded round the bows of the ‘sub’ I suddenly became aware of a dim presence hanging in the water over me, for all the world like a cloud. Then I saw two cold, evil-looking eyes, and made out the body and swaying tentacles of a giant cuttlefish. The body was from 10ft to 15ft in diameter, and the tentacles up to 15 or more feet in length.

“Fortunately, I ‘kept my nut’ as the saying is, but it was an awful feeling I felt in the pit of the stomach, I’ll tell you. Every diver is warned while undergoing his early training about the big cuttlefish, and he always carries a big knife handy on his belt. This was the first occasion I had encountered an octopus of any size. As he settled over me, gently and softly enveloping me, I slashed him right across the lower part of the body. It was funny what

happened then. He slowly released me and floated away. When the ink cleared (an octopus emits an inky fluid to obscure its victim's sight) I gave the signal to be raised to the surface. I did no more diving that day."

The last story I have is again from France, and concerns a giant squid, possibly one that Ellis records for 1935. It is the briefest of notes in the "Manawatu Standard" for 8 June 1938, p. 12: "A cuttlefish measuring 27ft caught by French fishermen in Gulf of Gascony."



Large cuttlefish *Sepia sp.* from Komodo National Park
Wikipedia Creative Commons

CAMELS IN AUSTRALIA AND AMERICA

By Kate Shaw of Strange Animals Podcast (strangeanimalspodcast.blubrry.net)

The camel is an even-toed ungulate, but it doesn't have hooves. Instead, it has padded feet with two hoof-like toenails. There are three species alive today, but the one we're talking about here is the dromedary, which has only one hump. It's native to the Middle East and northern Africa, but hasn't lived in the wild except as a feral animal for a few thousand years. It was domesticated at least 4,000 years ago.

The dromedary has been introduced to other parts of the world, but those introductions mostly happened a long time ago—as much as a thousand years ago in some areas, around six hundred years in others. Much more recently, some people decided Australia and North America needed camels. After all, parts of the interior of Australia and the southwestern United States and Mexico are deserts, and camels are adapted to live in deserts.-

The first camel in Australia was supposedly imported in 1840, a single camel named Harry who settled in to life down under successfully, although he was known as an ornery cuss even by camel standards. Harry was used as a pack animal until he was sold to a man named John Horrocks, a British explorer.

In 1846 Horrocks was shooting birds on a lakeshore in South Australia near the end of an expedition. It's not clear exactly what happened, but Harry was kneeling next to Horrocks and moved or started to get up just as Horrocks was reloading his shotgun. The pack Harry was carrying jostled against the gun and it went off, right in Horrocks's face. Horrocks died of his wounds a few weeks later, but his dying wish was for Harry to be shot dead. So Harry, the first camel in Australia, was killed in September 1846 and Horrocks will forever be known as the man who was shot by a camel.

It wasn't until 1860 that camels started being imported to Australia in great numbers. So the timeline here is: no camels ever in Australia until 1840, then one camel from 1840 to 1846, then no camels again, and finally a bunch of camels starting in 1860. So why is there a report from 1846 of a random camel wandering around in Australia in the early 1800s?

The report comes from a book called *A Visit to the Antipodes: With Some Reminiscences of a Sojourn in Australia*, which was written by a man called E. Lloyd. We don't know anything about E. Lloyd except that he wrote this

book about his travels. We don't even know his first name, although I bet it was Edward. Just a guess. Lloyd says that a camel had been imported by someone in the north country but that it had escaped and was living in the bush. Occasionally it would appear seemingly out of nowhere, frighten people who had never seen a camel before, which was most people in that area at that time, and wander off again. Eventually a donkey who had also escaped from a farm made friends with the camel and they were often seen together.

If this is true and not just something Lloyd made up, it means at least one camel was brought to Australia before 1840, but we don't know who or whether there were more. We also don't know that camel's name, but it might have been Edward too, who knows?

Camels were popular for transport and carrying goods across Australia for decades, with many cameleers brought in from India, Turkey, Egypt, and other countries to handle and care for the animals. But in the 1920s, trucks started becoming more common in Australia and by the 1930s the camels were on the way out. Many camel owners just released their animals into the wild once they were no longer useful, where they formed feral herds. Some of them were recaptured by Aboriginal people, who didn't have cars and trucks at the time and were pleased to get some free camels so they could visit distant villages more easily. The problem, of course, is that camels don't belong in Australia. They're an invasive species and they're very successful. Not only are there no predators of adult camels in Australia, there are no camel diseases since imported camels were carefully chosen to be disease-free. By 2013 there were an estimated 600,000 feral camels in Australia. They aren't as damaging to the environment as some invasive species, but they do take resources away from native animals and damage fencing and water pumps used for livestock. From 2009 to 2013, Australia killed around half of the feral camels in the country. After the recent droughts and fires, a new camel cull started in 2020. The goal isn't to kill all the camels, which would be expensive and nearly impossible anyway since there may be as many as a million camels by now, but to reduce their numbers so camels aren't destroying waterholes that native animals depend on the other side of the world, an ancestor of modern camels once lived in North America. It appears in the fossil record around 45 million years ago and was extremely successful. Its descendants lived throughout North America, including in the Arctic. It also migrated into South America and evolved into today's llamas and their relations, and into Eurasia by the Bering land bridge, where it evolved into Bactrian and dromedary camels. So North America not only used to have camels, it used to have the first camel. But the last camels went extinct around 11,000 years ago when so many of the other ice age megafauna also went extinct… until 1857, when the United States decided that what the American west needed was camels. They imported 75 dromedaries from the Middle East to

carry supplies between military outposts.

The camels were scattered throughout the west, from Texas to California, and were also used to carry loads during expeditions along the Mexican border. Apparently they did a good job and were well suited to the environment. Other people imported camels to use as beasts of burden too, not just the military. Some miners used camels to carry their packs, since they were stronger than mules and could withstand the harsh conditions of the desert better. But by the time trains and trucks became commonplace, the camels had mostly already been killed for meat, turned loose to fend for themselves, sold to circuses or zoos, or just died.

There never were as many camels imported to North America as to Australia and they were scattered widely throughout the west, so they probably didn't form feral herds. But dromedaries can live to be about forty years oldThere were credible sightings of camels in various places until around 1890.

That brings us to the legend of the Red Ghost. The Red Ghost was a hideous devil-like person that rode on the back of a monstrous animal. The Ghost had been sighted throughout what was then the Arizona territory, and stories of it spread throughout the mining camps and ranches in the area. The animal it rode on was huge and dangerous, rumored to have trampled people to death and killed horses and bears. No one knew whether the rider was a devilish person or a person-like devil.

Then two things happened that solved that mystery only to create a new one. A group of miners saw the Red Ghost along a river and, terrified, shot at it. They missed the animal but hit the rider, who fell to the ground and lay still. When the miners investigated, they found a partially mummified skeleton that had fallen off the animal's back.

Then a rancher shot and killed an animal he recognized as a camel, and when he examined the body, he found strips of rawhide tied to its body that had been used to lash the rider to it so securely that it hadn't fallen off until the miners shot the body off. No one knew who the person might have been or why he had been tied to a camel.

That story is creepy, but it's also probably not true, although a rancher did kill a feral camel in Arizona in the mid-1880s. He caught it eating his garden, which is not nearly as creepy but which at least proves that feral camels were in the west until nearly the turn of the 20th century.

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AIRBORNE MRS GUPPY

Loes Modderman

Anyone familiarizing himself with 19th century Spiritualism will be in for surprises, and sometimes hilarious situations for the ones who have imagination.
Although fraud was rampant, many of the strange happenings really occurred and were witnessed by reliable, often scientificly trained investigators.
Here one of those.

Mrs Agnes Nichol Guppy (1838-1917) was a powerful physical medium. Physical mediums are people who can bring about materialisations of spirits, apports of lifeless objects and living specimens of plants and animals and much more. Such mediums have been rare, but they existed - and maybe still exist.
Mrs Guppy was one of those extremely talented people, who was examinated closely for years by Alfred Russel Wallace, the biologist who partnered with Darwin on the Evolution theory.

Like many mediums Mrs Guppy was large. Not someone whom you associate with flying lightly through the air.
Flying happened to the big woman regularly, in seances, when she was in a trance. Attendees of her seances had seen her fly over graciously on more than one occasion..
But the story of the most spectacular flight is written down in psychoanalyst **Nandor Fodor's** book *'These Mysterious People*. (1936). It happened on June 3, 1871. He writes: *"From her house in Highbury she was whisped away by an invisible power to the London house of Charles Williams, another medium, living at Lamb Conduit Street nr 61, a distance of 2 miles as the crow flies."*
At that particular hour there was a seance going on in the house of Charles Williams, where one of the circle had wished , just as a joke, for Mrs Guppy to arrive. Well, she did. She crashed on the table in the middle of 10 people attending the seance. Imagine.
Mrs Guppy was still in trance at her unexpected arrival, but she regained consciousness pretty soon. I her right hand she had a wet pen, for the moment she was taken up she had been writing a letter.
Some clothing dropped down from the ceiling after her landing. And some flowers as well.

Her husband was in the room writing bills on the moment of her departure, but all he witnessed was a slight mist.
All people involved, most of them well educated and upper class, swore to what they had seen and wrote it down, signing with their names..
Allthough the press did everything to ridicule Mrs Guppy's flight (and funny it certainly was!), the testimony of so many people was hard to dismiss.

ACOUSTIC KITTY

Loes Modderman

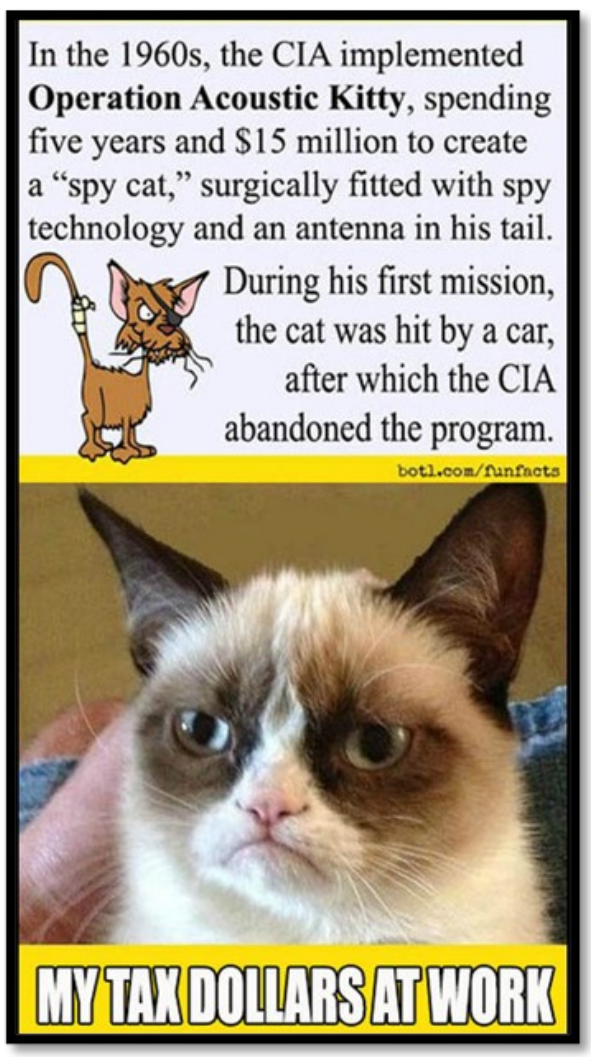
People are doing strange things. And when a war has to be won, strangeness increases, as if people shed everything that bound them to rational thinking and replace it by weird enemy ideas and total lack of respect for human and animal life.

Nick Redfern wrote a book about how Americans and others used - or tried to use, animals in warfare. Always absurdly expensive, but not always very succesfiul, as we shall see.

Listen to the story of 'Acoustic Kitty' .

Star Trek fans know the 'Borg', a race of aliens that play an important role in the series. They move around space in enormous cubes, and every other civilisation they happen to meet they seek to convert in hybridic drones: half flesh, half technology. That conversion is almost always succesful, for *"Resistence is Futile"* .

Perhaps *'Resistence is Futile'* crossed the cat mind of Acoustic Kitty, when the master race of CIA agents cut her open and replaced some of her soft organs with wires and hardware. I don't think they explained to her her future calling: being a catspy in the service of the nation's Cold War with Russia. If that Cold War would have warmed kitty's heart is unlikely.


In the 1960s, the CIA implemented **Operation Acoustic Kitty**, spending five years and $15 million to create a "spy cat," surgically fitted with spy technology and an antenna in his tail.
During his first mission, the cat was hit by a car, after which the CIA abandoned the program.
botl.com/funfacts
MY TAX DOLLARS AT WORK

The plan was that the cat would roam around the Russian Ambassy, while microphones in her tail and transmitters in her body recorded fragments of conversations that could help make the political situation even worse than it already was.

Such healthy plans don't come cheap. The whole operation took 5 years, innummerable highly trained wartechnicians and deep thinkers, and the costs were about 15 million. In the Sicties. Now it would be many times that amount. Kitty did it for free, by the way.

She survived the operations. And recovered acording to plan. Nevertheless some human intelligentia had doubts. Kitty was still a cat, and it was very hard to convince her that she had to concentrate, and listen in

on conversations without being distracted by catty things like an insect, or another cat. So they manipulated her sense of hunger, by operating on her brain.

And then came the Big Day of the first trial on location.

In a discrete car they brought her to the Ambassy, and opened the door...

Kitty was only a few meters away when a speeding taxi hit and killed her.

This cat had no nine lives, says Nick Redfern.

She sure had not. The CIA didn't know how to move away from this costly debacle. Cats are safe now, and don't have to chose between loyalties any more.

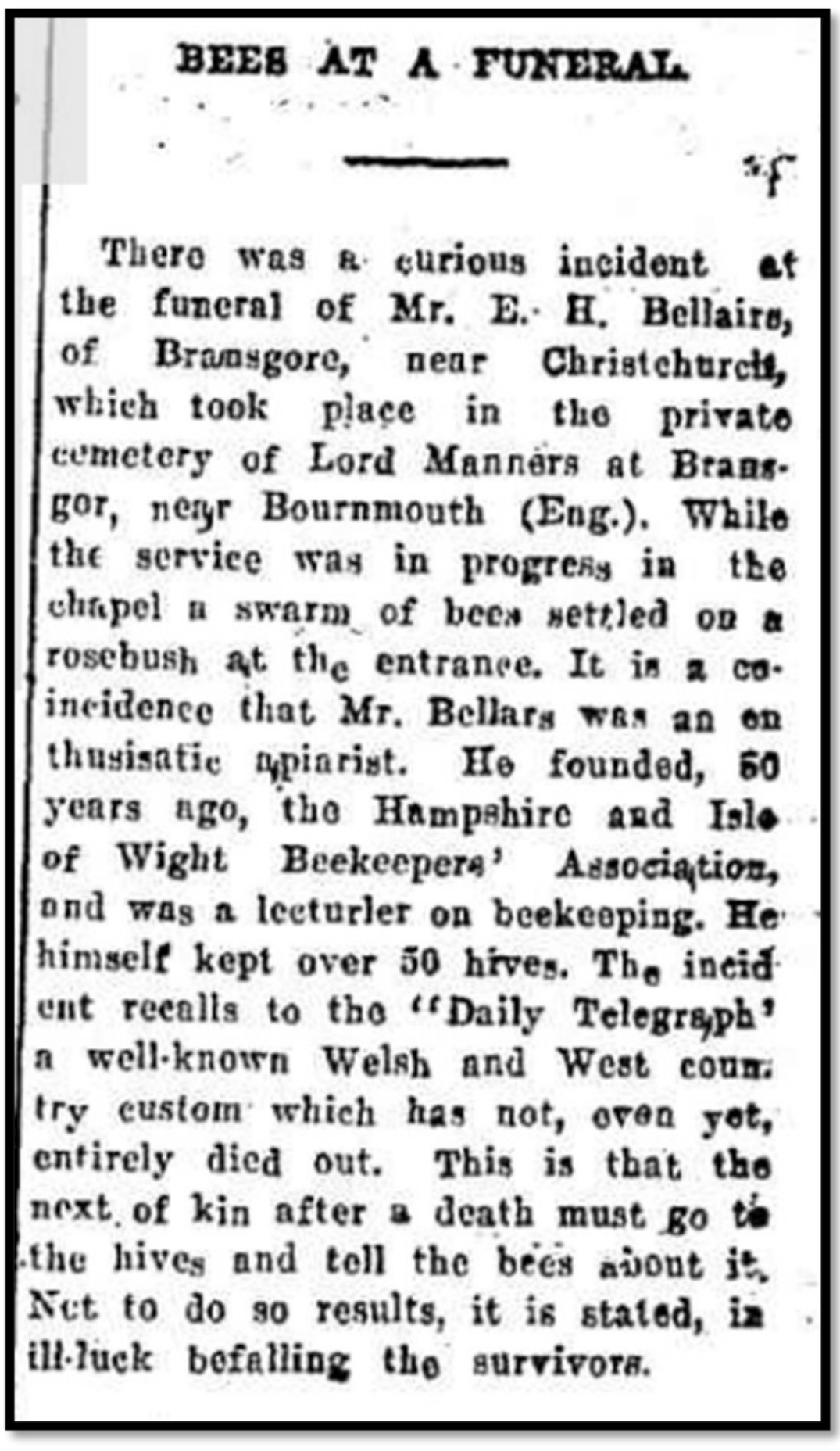
Untill another idiot thinks up some crazy idea, of course.

TELLING THE BEES
Loes Modderman

A man knocks at the door of a farm on the edge of a vast naturereserve, the Catskill Mountains in the State New York. The man is dressed in an bee-keeper outfit, and he has an urgent request for the people in the house: may he go looking for his bees behind their house?
The case is this, elaborates the man, that his mother recently passed, and wanted her coffin filled with honey.
Everyone can understand that this was quite a task, and so the bee-keeper had completely forgotten to inform the bees of his mothers passing.
So the bees took off, insulted by his lack of attentiveness.
But lo and behold, shortly he saw one of his bees flying to the back of this very house, and if only he could follow that bee?
He got his permission. and was never seen again, so if he found his bees, no one can tell.
I found this story in the book *'Grave Goods'* by John O'Grady (2001)
True or not true, the belief that bees have to be told of important happenings in the family is very much a fact that still lives on in England. I checked in other countries, and in Germany and France there are similar beliefs.
But England, and from there transported to the USA and Australia, the tradition of 'Telling the Bees' is not yet forgotten.As is mentioned in the clippings it's not only a death that has to be shared with the bees. Also other important happenings in the family should not be kept from the insects. Births and marriages, imagine the bees wouldn't know about it.

Telling the Bees

What would happen if this courtesy of 'Telling the Bees' is neglected?
Not everyone has the same ideas; they may differ from region to region.
Some traditions say that the bees are going to pine away and die a few days later, others believe they will leave the hive and fly away to an unknown destination.
But everyone agrees that the telling should happen softly and with empathy, or the shock would be too great for the delicate emotions of the bees, especially when the bee-keeper is involved.To spare the bees the ordeal of witnessing the funeral, the hives are sometimes temporarily brought to another place.
There are many stories of bees who come to say goodbye to their owners, just before leaving, or even attending the funeral. Like this one, from: ***Mullumbimby Star (NSW) Thur 30-10 1930*** In an article of Dr. Reese Halter on Huffington Post I found this:



BEES AT A FUNERAL.

There was a curious incident at the funeral of Mr. E. H. Bellairs, of Bramsgore, near Christchurch, which took place in the private cemetery of Lord Manners at Bramsgor, neyr Bournmouth (Eng.). While the service was in progress in the chapel a swarm of bees settled on a rosebush at the entrance. It is a coincidence that Mr. Bellars was an enthusiatic apiarist. He founded, 50 years ago, the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Beekeepers' Association, and was a lecturler on beekeeping. He himself kept over 50 hives. The incident recalls to the "Daily Telegraph" a well-known Welsh and West country custom which has not, even yet, entirely died out. This is that the next of kin after a death must go to the hives and tell the bees about it. Not to do so results, it is stated, in ill-luck befalling the survivors.

In 1934, when Sam Roger's died in Shropshire, England, his bees paid their farewell at his graveside funeral. They landed on a nearby tombstone and as soon as he was buried they departed In the past there were strong beliefs around the 'special' bees, who were thought to be religious and even build churches with their wax. In England and Wales the bee was sometimes seen as the representation of the soul, like birds in ancient Egypt.

Bees were members of the family, and shared in grief and fun. A piece of the funeral of wedding cake was offered to them, and some wine too.
Sometimes also as a peace-offering in case the duty to inform them was neglected.
Then the one who would take care of the bees, say the widow, had to ask politely if the bees would please work for her, not that the master was dead.

She needed to tie a black ribbon around the hives.
There were songs and rhymes to express these pleas, like

"Honey Bees, honey Bees, Hear what I say!
Your Master ...has passed away.
But his wife now begs you will freely stay
And still gather honey for many a day.
Bonny bees, bonny bees, hear what I say!"

Beas are peaceful creatures, and they abhor strife. When members of the family are fighting about who will inherit the hives when the bee-keeper is dead, the bees die. Even having an argument within earshot of the bees can be disastrous: de bees die, or they fly away to more peaceful surroundings.

The habit of 'Telling the bees' lead, predictably, to more superstition. When a baby died in Sussex, the mother blamed herself because she forgot to tell the bees about the child's birth.
Undoubtedly such instances have been plentiful, and they illustrate the importance people attached to this curious custom.
Why bees, and not all the other insects that have a destiny to fulfill in the great plan of nature?
Probably because we humans have always known that bees are of great importance for our own survival, and honey is the food of the gods: healthy, with many unique characteristics.
Maybe we should start 'telling the bees' again to keep them with us.

17 Mar 2016.

BEES PAY RESPECTS

Following the death of the famous boxer on 6 June, the Muhammad Ali Centre in Louisville, Kentucky, a museum close to Ali's childhood home, was visited by 15,000 bees, which made their home next to a "Float Like a Butterfly, Sting Like a Bee" mural. Beekeeper Kevin McKinney was called in to rehome the insects. The mural is a quotation from Ali: prior to fighting George Foreman in the 1974 Rumble in the Jungle, he told reporters: "Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee, his hands can't hit what his eyes can't see."
D.Telegraph, 6 June 2016.

Above: From Fortean Times # 343

"TELL IT TO THE BEES"

"Telling the bees," when a death or marriage takes place in a family, is, or was, an English practice in vogue from Northumberland to the Isle of Wight. It was also followed in the eastern States of the United States. A death in the family should always be notified to the bees and in a whisper, in order to lessen the shock. Else the bees will resent the slight cast on them as members of the household, and, if not properly advised, either desert the hives or die. In Shropshire even the rooks used to be informed as well; and in Oxfordshire, after a piece of black crepe had been tied on the hives, they were tapped three times with the house key, and the inmates were told. "Bees, bees, bees, your master is dead, and now you must work for—the next owner." On a a marriage the bees expect the hives to be decorated with a wedding favour. As to the origin of this practice, there has been considerable correspondence in the "Observer." The negroes of Surinam, in Guiana (as recorded in Stedman's "Narrative"), believe that the bees regard themselves as the master's tenants, and therefore as members of the household; they would never harm the master or any of his people (which, indeed, is a general fact). Thus, naturally, they look to being informed of any important occurrence affecting the family of which they are members.

Kalgoorlie Miner July 27th 1936

"TELLING THE BEES."

There have again appeared in newspapers references to the superstition that bees are able to "foresee" death. It is a very old superstition, and associated with it was a quaint custom. When a member of a family owning bees died the news was at once "told" to the bees, and their hives were draped with mourning. If this were not done it was believed that the bees would seek a new home.

Maryborough Chronicle August 29th 1933

TELLING THE BEES.

A correspondent writes:—"Superstitions die hard, even in practical Yorkshire. All have heard of the danger of leaving two knives crossed on the table, of the bad luck which follows from seeing an odd number of magpies, and of a thousand other dangers which make life one vast adventure, but there are, it appears, even yet things in heaven and the Upper Calder Valley undreamt of in any scientific philosophy. A Calderdale beekeeper, suffering from an incurable malady, was removed the other day to an institution, and death took place very shortly afterwards. On the day of his death all his bees died. They died, it seems, because nobody told the bees.' Had someone gone to the bees and said certain words the bees would have lived. Only a few years ago there died an old woman who knew those powerful words, and she was able in her lifetime to save many a hive.

Geelong Advertiser
June 27th 1914

Macleay Chronicle
August 2nd 1939

Telling The Bees.

In his London Diary for June 17, Critic writes:—

Mr. Park is a great bee-keeper. He is sentimenal about bees and quite impervious to their stings. Yesterday he had a small cut in his eyelid; he explained that he had just dug a bee-sting out of the side of his eye with his knife and that his arms were still full of them. Two swarms had tried to occupy the same territory in a neighbouring farm house; he had gone to collect the swarms and found them fighting fiercely. They had taken a lot of getting because they were in a narrow slit behind a pipe. But they were fighting all over the roof," wrestling and buzzing and falling off the roof on to the ground in scores. You could have swept up a peck of dead bees off the ground underneath." Then he went on to repeat the old superstition about "telling the bees." Bees, he said, were remarkably sensitive to the death of the man who owned them. If the owner died you had to take the key of his house and tap on each hive and say "So-and-so is dead." If you failed to do this all the bees would disappear in a few days. They would die or go away and "no one would see them go." When you took the key and told the bees their owner was dead, the queen would come out and hover round outside for a minute as if she were going off and then she would go back. If you said nothing you would lose all your bees, as had happened to a friend of his who had forgotten to tell the bees when the master died. I pressed him for evidence. "It's been proved times out of number," he said. And what happened if you told the bees falsely when no one was dead? Were the bees deceived? Did the queen come out and hover round just the same? "No," he said, "you could not deceive them like that." He had not tried himself, but he knew a man who had. Anyway, there was no doubt about it; you must tell the bees; it had been proved times out of number. I believe a considerable ritual about "telling the bees" exists in various parts of the country. It was new to me at first hand, described with simple faith only an hour from London.

ENVIRONMENT OF ALIEN BIG CATS NEAR ST ALBANS

These photographs supplied to me by Richard George show the locations where mystery big cats have been seen near St Albans. They should have been in Flying Snake # 19 but there was not enough space.

All photos © Richard George

THE DAY IT RAINED FROGS (ABRIDGED)

By the Editors of Fate

Fate May 1958 Volume 11,Number 5,Issue number 98.Thanks to Gary Mangiacopra

One day in October,1912,William W.Bathlot,who now lives in Albuquerque,New Mexico,was driving a mail wagon in Beaver County,Oklahoma. He was about a mile from the Floris Post Office on his return trip when a streak of lightning shot across the sky.

Bathlot peered out of the open window of his mail wagon and saw a heavy cloud in the sky with the darkest portion directly overhead. In a few minutes small objects began thudding down upon the roof of the mail wagon.Bathlot assumed they were hail stones, but as he looked he saw thousands of small objects spraying outward from the roof of the wagon and from the backs of his horses...

.

“Among this myriad of small creatures I failed to see one killed or crippled from the fall,” Bathlot declares. “For some unknown reason they all landed upon their backs, thus protecting their little, soft, white bellies. I could peer outward for perhaps 100 feet through the falling rain and as far as I could see the top of the earth was alive with the little creatures. “I held my hand out of the wagon window and caught four, fat, brown little toads all about the size of my thumb nail. Each was perfect ,with legs and no tail. I had heard of fish and frogs falling from the clouds but I never had heard of a fall of toads...

“As near as folks who had seen or been caught in this shower of toads could figure, it had covered a space of about a mile long and a quarter of a mile wide. There was no exact way of measuring for the little creatures had disappeared completely within a short time after their fall. They must have worked down into the soft, wet, sandy soil.

Mr Bathlot`s account, which appeared in the June,1953,issue of FATE,is one of hundreds which describe strange falls from the sky-everything from “thunderstones” to huge chunks of ice.It was only natural that Bathlot`s story attract letters from FATE reader`s who reported similar experiences.

J.S.Randall of Orlando,Florida,sat down and wrote us a letter on September 26,1953.” About 3:15 yesterday afternoon we had a shower, no heavier than others during the month, but this one contained millions of small frogs. They came down on the house and on the car parked in the yard. My three small daughters caught about 400 of them...

“The frogs are small enough to sit down on a dime and not extend over the edge. They are unlike any frogs I`ve ever seen around here. I and several friends have looked closely but we can find no holes the frogs might have made in coming out of the ground.

“I know for certain they came in the rain clouds because they fell on top of the car while I was in it. They crawled down the windshield onto the hood in the presence of two other persons besides my family. I called the newspaper office here and reports are coming in from all around Orlando that frogs are crawling into houses under the doors and are in general making things hum for everybody. Last night the rain came in torrents and was loaded with more frogs. The reporter from the paper thinks they are hatching out but I know they came in the rain. They are found on roof tops as well as on car tops and they can`t jump that high…”

Marie Nyeholt of Pico, California,wrote: “Many years ago, when a child, I lived lived with my parents in Livingston, a peninsula on the Caribbean coast of Guatemala. After a sudden tropical storm, thousands of tiny frogs would appear as if from nowhere. “They were about the size of a large thumbnail, and the paths and gullies teemed with them. I would gather the little creatures in an empty coffee can and much to my mother`s horror turn them loose in the house.”With the ending of the storm the little frogs would disappear as mysteriously as they came and to this day I have found no satisfactorily explanation for them.” Grace Weir of Watsonville,California,wrote that she had good reason to believe Mr Bathlot`s story because she was 13 years old she too was caught in a “toadstorm”. “My sister and brothers and I went to our beautiful lake to bathe. It was not too far from home in a small cove with soft golden sand and a background of spruce timberland near a primitive little hamlet called Chezzetcook, Nova Scotia.” (continues on p.51)

Among the many authenticated accounts of 'rains of fishes,' that which occurred at Singapore, in the Straits Settlements, on April 13, 1861, is probably the most remarkable. Following as earthquake which devastated a considerable portion of the city there came so extraordinary downpour, resulting in the accumulation of as much water as would be contained in a lake of considerable size. For three days and nights this rain came down in torrents, and in the pools which it formed upon the ground large numbers of fish were found." *(11 October 1925). "Mystery of the 'Red Rains' in Japan"*. *The Fresno Bee*. Unknown author. Wikipedia Commons.

“We kids had never seen anything like that in our young lives and naturally we were excited. We ran for the shore to gather some up; I recall I counted 18 baby toads that I held without crowding them or injuring them…”

Nada Domay of Winslow, Washington,also described personal experiences in the “flat woods” of Florida near Largo.” The rain storms came up very quickly. Almost on a minute`s notice the sky would turn black and down it came. “My brother and I were playing in the yard and as we ran for the house we were surprised to see it raining tiny brownish-red toads—perfect little things with dainty little bodies, feet and even tiny warts. The ground was covered with a hopping, squirming mass of them. They hit the ground very hard but it did not seem to hurt them as the ground was marshy with much rain. They soon hopped away—all but a few dozen that the hens ate.

“Many times it rained tiny fish from one-half inch to an inch long, transparent little fish with large heads and big eyes. You could see through their glassy little bodies, see the backbone and a little blood view from the head to the tail. Those that lit on the bare ground died or were eaten by the chickens and other birds but the ones that fell into the drainage ditches and water puddles swam or were washed along to the bay.”

Similarly,the July 26,1952,issue of the Los Angeles Times reported a .18 inch rain at Big Bear,California. Immediately after the rain the pavements suddenly were covered by frogs estimated by residents to number millions. Those not crushed in the jam hopped away.

Many other creatures apparently fall from the skies. It is always easy to explain away a rain of frogs by saying that “they just came out of the ground,”but it is a little difficult to give the same explanation for rains of fish, crabs and snails.

One of the most famous falls on record took place in May,1881,in Worcestershire,England. A spring thunderstorm had sent the residents scurrying for shelter. Immediately after the storm, people travelling along busy Cromer Gardens Road were astonished to find the roadway covered with hermit crabs, periwinkles and small crabs of an unknown variety.Hundreds of people rushed out and gathered these creatures up in buckets, baskets, sacks-even in hats. The current price of snails on the market had been quoted at around $4 per bushel –not very cheap-and here was a welcome gift from the skies-manna.

The total area covered by the fall was more than a square mile and contemporary accounts agree that the amount gathered actually totalled many tons. Worcester is about 50 miles from the ocean. There was no sand, seaweed, clam shells or pebbles with this fall.

The strange thing is that this sort of thing keeps happening all the time. It isn`t necessary to go back to 1881.

In Yoro,Honduras,according to recent newspaper accounts, you can get a fresh fish dinner delivered to you at supper time right out of the sky. Every year at the beginning of the rainy season there is a fall of fish. Natives of Yoro prepare for the harvest as soon as a little black cloud forms over Cerro el Mal Nombre northeast of town. They gather up their baskets ,pails and washtubs and head for the grassy plains outside the town. And as the cloud passes overhead it rains thousands of sardine-like fish, three or four inches long, in the granddaddy of all storms.

Yoro is 50 miles inland and separated from the coast by a mountain range. Difficult for fish to swim out there.

John Murphy was hurrying along a street in downtown Toronto during a rainstorm in March,1954,when he was struck in the face by a fish. He insists that it fell out of the sky and swam away in the gutter before he could grab it...Some explanations for mysterious falls are that the creatures are scooped up by tornadoes or waterspouts and carried inland. It would seem difficult, however, for tornadoes to selectively choose myriads of tiny frogs or toads, say, and leave everything else in the particular water hole alone.And how explain the vast quantities of these things that apparently rain down?

Scientists also explain the falls by saying the rain has just brought the creatures out of the ground. But how explain that they are found also on roofs, are seen falling, and are even caught in the hand? No, each type of fall would have to have a different explanation if we are to believe the men who have an answer for everything. If we never had seen a frog fall, seen one on the roof, or caught one in our hand, we might accept the theory that they come out of the ground. A particularly strange story with startling possibilities came to us a couple of years ago from the Oregon Commission,and was also published in the Oregon Journal.

Fred Kuehn of Portland,Oregon, was walking through the woods of Larch Mountain with his family, checking the huckleberry crop. As they proceeded down an abandoned plank road just beyond Brower Road and the Larch Mountain Highway,Kuehn found a pile of trout beside the road.

It wasn`t a great pile of trout. It was a great big pile of trout. It was eight feet long, five feet wide and over a foot deep. The fish were all five to eight inches long, every one of them. Fred Locke of the Oregon Game Commission went up there to investigate and he reported there were more trout in that pile than the state`s largest fish liberation truck could transport in one load.

As far as we know, this mystery has never been solved. Perhaps it has a simple explanation. But if it doesn`t have a simple explanation then it could have a very complicated one. Such as some creature of another world, or another time dimension or another space dimension capriciously gathering up a huge batch of trout preparatory to raining them down somewhere….and somehow being thwarted from this particular prank. Consider the fact that virtually every fall of fish or frogs or toads of which we have record consists of very small creatures. Maybe there`s a type of toad which is able to create a mass of webby-type material about its eggs so they can be wind-borne. And maybe these eggs hatch in the sky and feed on tiny insects up there, and come down because they get caught in a rain storm. This isn`t a very likely theory, but it seems as likely as any other. Or suppose these creatures exist in another time dimension ,or another space dimension and somehow pass from that dimension into our own. Such a concept has never been proved either . We can`t even prove that there are other time or space dimensions. The only thing we must admit is that even the scientists` explanation of these mysterious falls are mighty hard to swallow. If they are due to whirlwinds ,how do they happen to be so selective-why not a lot of other debris accompanying them?...There are only four known kinds of fresh water jellyfish, although there are thousands of species of ocean jellyfish. Of the four known kinds of fresh water jellyfish, two species live only in Africa.Any fresh water jellyfish is extremely rare in this country. Yet a couple of years ago ,scientists found freshwater jellyfish in Crystal Lake,which supplies water to Ravenna,Ohio.They were about the size of silver dollars and looked like little transparent umbrellas, trailing a dozen or so tentacles around their rims...The point is, no one knows were they came from. No other freshwater jellyfish had ever been found there. Maybe these jellyfish came in a fall from the sky…”

THE CONGOLESE NDENDECKI – A VERITABLE DINOSAUR TURTLE?

ShukerNature blog of January 31st 2021
Reproduced with permission

Reconstruction of the possible appearance in life of the Congolese ndendecki, alongside a local pygmy for scale purposes (© David Miller/Prof. Roy P. Mackal)

During the 1980s, Prof. Roy P. Mackal, famous as both a Chicago University biochemist and an enthusiastic spare-time cryptozoologist, led two expeditions to the Republic of the Congo (formerly the French Congo) in search of a mysterious water beast known as the mokele-mbembe, which apparently bears a remarkable resemblance to a small sauropod dinosaur. Sadly, they did not encounter any such creature while there, but they did discover that it was only one of several different types of very large mystery reptile claimed by the local pygmies and Western missionaries to inhabit the vast and virtually inaccessible Likouala swamplands in this country's central region. Among this assortment of cryptozoological curiosities was the ndendecki, which Mackal's expeditions nicknamed the dinosaur turtle

due to its huge size, at least according to reports from eyewitnesses living in the village of Boha and collated by Gilbert Bonguenele Manengue. He was a public security agent commissioned by the military governor general of Brazzaville (this country's capital) to gather together for Mackal's expeditions any available information appertaining to putative unknown animals, and was himself born in Boha.

Life-sized fossil replica of a *Stupendemys* carapace (© Chris Gladis aka MShades-Wikipedia - CC BY 2.0 licence)

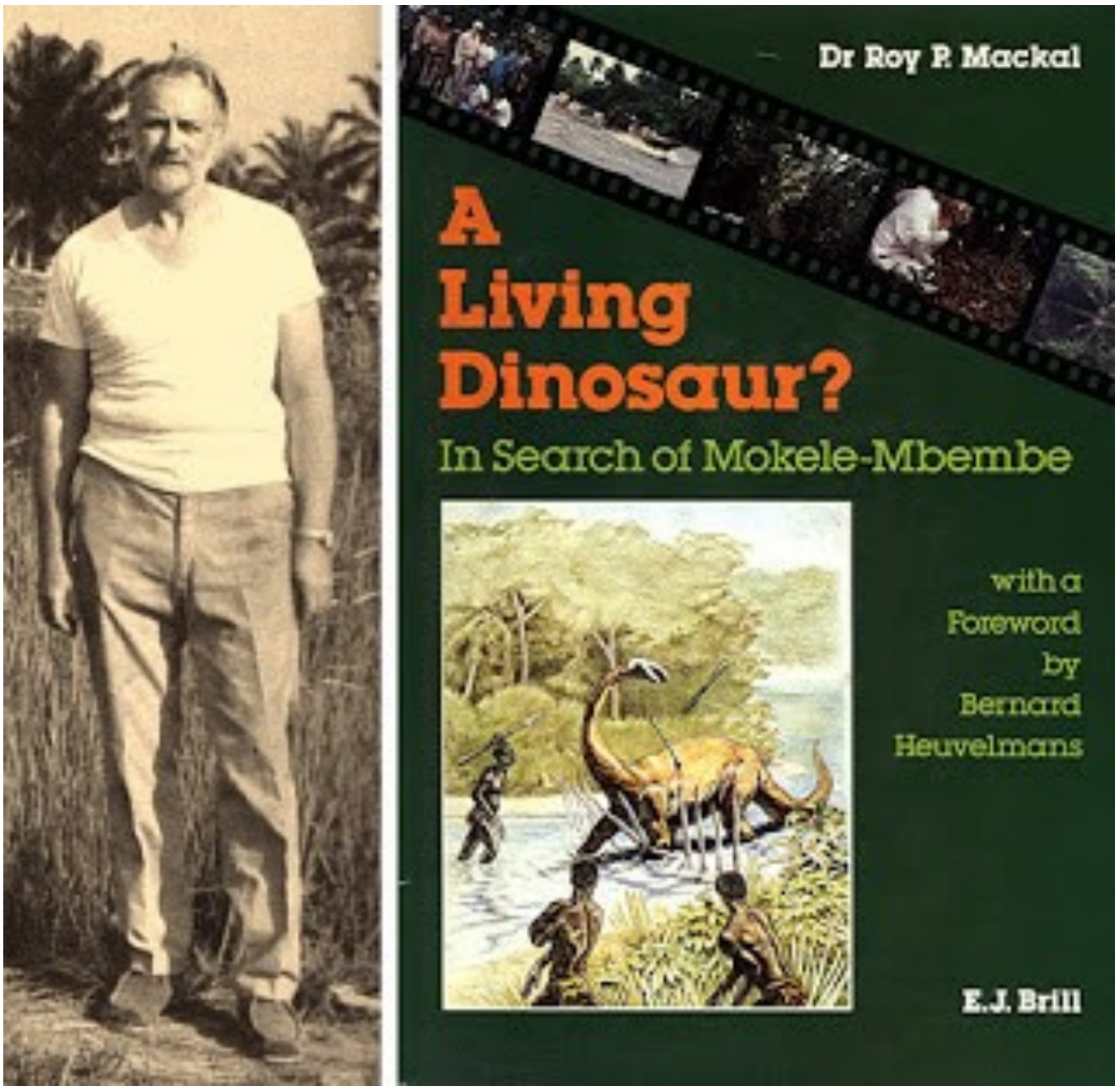
The shell of this gargantuan freshwater chelonian was claimed by the Boha villagers to be conspicuously rounded in shape and to measure some 12-15 ft in diameter, which is very considerably bigger than that of any known species of aquatic chelonian alive today. It even exceeds the largest known fossil freshwater chelonian, the aptly-named *Stupendemys*, a side-necked turtle from South America's Miocene epoch that may have grown up to 11 ft long, but slightly less in diameter. Happily, however, the ndendecki apparently poses no threat to humans, browsing harmlessly upon detritus at the bottom of rivers and lakes.

As it happens, the Likouala swamps are already known to harbour one fairly large species of freshwater turtle, the African softshell *Trionyx triunguis* – a well-documented chelonian found in many parts of Africa. However, this species rarely exceeds 3 ft across. Nevertheless, Congolese zoologist Dr Marcellin Agnagna, who has participated in several mokele-mbembe expeditions and has extensive knowledge of the Likouala's fauna, is convinced that this species and the gigantic ndendecki are one and the same, dismissing the appreciable size difference between the two as nothing more than exaggeration upon the part of the eyewitnesses.

Softshells, plus an African hoopoe (public domain)

Yet such exaggeration would need to be on a very grand scale indeed to enlarge a 3-ft turtle by approximately four to five times, and it seems unlikely that locals would be prone to such an overestimation of size for a species that is very common here and must therefore be a familiar sight to them. Consequently, it seems more plausible to believe that amid the Likouala's immense and yet scarcely explored wilderness of lakes, rivers, and swamps are some extra-large individuals of *T. triunguis* that have lived to great ages and continued growing throughout their protracted lives. Perhaps 13-16.5 ft is indeed an exaggeration, but even a softshell only half as big would still be an extremely imposing creature to encounter, and could certainly explain the ndendecki.

More information concerning the ndendecki can be found in Roy Mackal's book *A Living Dinosaur?* (1987).



Prof. Roy P. Mackal and his book *A Living Dinosaur?* (© Prof. R P. Mackal/E.J. Brill)

3 COMMENTS:

Simon: 31 January 2021: I have never heard of this cryptid until now, so many thanks for posting! And I do concure that it is much more likely to actually exist than a surviving sauropod...

1.

2.

Richard 31 January 2021:White Some of the Indian and Chinese trio-nychids are pretty large, especially the ones that were protected and fed in monasteries.

Dr Karl Shuker 1 February 2021: Yes indeed, but not up to 15ft in diame-ter, as claimed by locals for the ndendecki,though this claim may of course be an exaggerated one.

3.

Lynx in the Forest of Dean

Carl Marshall

In late 2019, while searching for feral boar in the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire (as well as its feral boar, this location is well known for ABC reports. Many sightings have been logged in this area of what appear to be big cats, typically melanistic animals presumed to be black leopards (black jaguars are not suited to the British climate), and occasionally, faun-grey coloured animals believed to be pumas), my friends ten year old son Monty Bell Jr (Mj) discovered this spoor (see photos) while searching muddy areas for trace evidence of boar activity. Mj wasn't entirely sure what he'd found, but noticed quite correctly that it was unlike a dog's paw print, there being no claw marks present. Other than the conspicuous lack of claw marks, I could see straight away other features that strongly suggest this spoor was made by a medium-sized felid species.

This is particularly fascinating, and pertinent to my own ongoing researches, as about six years ago a forestry worker, whom I'm also good friends, photographed on his mobile phone a very similar spoor approximately a mile or so from where Mj made his find. As we were only there to show MJ the boar, which are reasonably common, we regrettably had no plaster with us to make a cast, so we made do as best we could and photographed the track from multiple angles, allowing scale to be determined, and then placed two straight twigs - one between the first and second toes, and another between the third and fourth toes, forming an X. This simple, yet useful technique can only be preformed perfectly on symmetrical prints such as those of the Canidae (dogs and their kin). The asymmetrical shape of Mj's track, along with the lack of claw marks previously mentioned, and what appears to be a large three lobed plantar pad (the large rear pad), all indicate an average sized felid species being the track maker. We can clearly see evidence of skeletal structure that is more consistent with the Felidae. In fact, there is an easily identifiable dog spoor situated slightly to the right in the photos, which, again, clearly show the obvious differences.

In order to be as proficient as possible, I emailed copies of the photographs to several specialists for their professional opinions, both zoologists and wildlife biologists, and to date, only one has seriously suggested the print belonged to a large dog, and even this individual initially believed it to be feline, that is until I revealed the location where the print was discovered. This so-called "expert" then suddenly backtracked, mooting instead for a dog. Healthy canine tracks are always symmetrical! If this had been made by a dog, the two twigs (I call this the X test), would sit neatly between the first and second toes, and the

third and fourth toes, without touching either edge of the plantar pad, nor any of the adjacent toes. I had always thought that the object of science was to determine the truth rather than to make sure one's own theories triumph, but apparently there are people who think otherwise. Mj's discovery is, in my professional opinion, extremely unlikely to be that of a dog.

Dr Darren Naish, of *Tetrapod Zoology* had this to say:

"*From what I can see, they certainly look like large cat tracks to me. Breadth, disposition of the digital pads, space between the toe pads and plantar pad, all suggest a felid.*"

Dr Richard Lamb, an Entomologist who regularly takes the time to investigate ABCs, was more cautious, but concluded:

"*I've had a good look at these and all I can say is inconclusive. They could be a domestic dog, but a medium sized felid cannot be ruled out.*"

British zoologist and cryptozoologist, Dr Karl Shuker, added:

"*Thanks for showing me these, and yes, I too think them most likely to be feline – the general proportions and layout certainly seem to indicate this, especially the squatness and asymmetry, plus, as you yourself note, the X test. Size-wise, lynx seems reasonable, also the particular shape is reminiscent of lynx.*"

Conclusions

I think it's most likely that an individual, or possibly one or more members of an organisation, have been continually releasing lynx (or at least lynx-sized felids of unknown species) into the Forest of Dean for at least the last six years, possibly longer, in an attempt perhaps to control deer and reduce fox numbers, or maybe it's somebody well connected who just really likes lynx! On a darker note it might also be an example of canned hunting, which is the deplorable killing of captive-bred wild animals, released illegally into a forested location and then cruelly hunted down.

(The photos on the following pages are © Carl Marshall)

Once resident in Scotland, the lynx is thought to have become extinct in the UK during the medieval period around 1,300 years ago. There is little evidence to depute this fact.

The lynx, with its minimal range requirements, smaller size, elusive nature, and crepuscular hunting habits, would undoubtedly be one of the most appropriate species (or perhaps even groups of species), likely to survive largely unnoticed in British forests.

How might Rewilding the lynx affect cryptozoology and ABC research?

Lynx are likely inhabiting certain areas of Britain. There have been numerous eyewitness reports, a CCTV recording, and not to mention the specimens collected, both dead and alive. The spoor evidence Mj discovered in the Forest of Dean suggests that at least one animal, comparable to a lynx in terms of its size and the depth and deposition of its spoor, was at least at that time residing in the forest. Exactly how this relates to the track discovered six years earlier is unclear. One might therefore wonder how might the rewilding of the lynx affect cryptozoology and ABC research? As all British Lynx are very likely either escaped or released animals, and not necessarily of the same species, I predict we will eventually see the presence of hybrid genetic markers occurring in the bloodlines of the reintroduced stock following the rewilding program, and if this is so, this may present strong molecular data in favour of the species' former presence in Britain. Molecular data is far more likely to convince scientists once and for all, than any amount of testimonial and circumstantial evidence - maybe this is how we prove that at least one species of non native felid resides in Britain.

One must be prudent in scientific research and real scientists should always be skeptical, even to the point of doubting one's own doubts, but it can no more fall into blind incredulity than into gullibility, both *a priori* attitudes. To quote Pierre Bayle: *"To believe nothing and to believe everything are extreme positions and both worthless..."*

The makeup of the spoor discovered by Mj in the Forest of Dean, clearly shows features not characteristic of the Canidae, although, we should bare in mind that this is the impression left by a foot, not the foot itself! That being said, it clearly shows specific impressions of the skeletal structure which are more consistent with that of a felid, than of a canid; such as the diameter and disposition of the digital pads, the general asymmetry of the track, the distance between the toe pads and plantar pad, the specific shape, and lastly, the lack of visible claw marks. In short, from an anatomical point of view, this is within

the degree of relative certainty appropriate to the biological sciences. At the very least the scales are heavily tipped in favour of the Felidae. This discovery, and the almost unanimous recognition of these features by several independent, qualified specialists is hugely significant.

Personally, I think this is all but short of proof of the existence of non-native felid species living undetected in the Forest of Dean.

PTERODACTYLS IN SHROPSHIRE?

Richard George

Shropshire and the Welsh Borders boast beautiful upland scenery, fascinating history and legends (1), and some splendidly picturesque place-names. (My favourite is Lurkenhope, because it's what we Forteans do a lot of the time – lurk in hope !) But pterodactyls ? Surely not. However Brett Swancer, in a 2019 post on mysterious universe, quotes an unnamed woman from the town of Whitchurch who claims exactly that (2).

In 2017 (Swancer givers no more accurate dating) this lady was in her garden when she heard a screech unlike anything she had experienced before. She then saw, flying past some trees, side by side, two pterodactyl-like creatures. They were greyish in colour, their wings were featherless and almost bat-like, and they had giant beaks. No bird she looked up fitted their description, she said, not even the largest heron.

"Not long afterwards" (how long ?) her thirteen-year-old son reported seeing a giant brown bird, much larger than the local raptors, which also made a screeching noise. When shown a pterodactyl he said "That's it !" Note, though, that his creature was brown, not greyish.

According to Jonathan Whitcomb's website, the date for these sightings was September 2017 (3). In this same month, according to Brett Swancer's piece, a man in a park in nearby Telford witnessed an unfamiliar bird with a 4-6 foot wingspan, He described its coloration as "mottled greyish-brown".

This Telford sighting seems awkwardly crowbarred in, as it doesn't sound like a pterodactyl, but rather an unfamiliar bird. The most likely candidate here would be an immature Grey Heron.

But returning to the woman and her son, it is very unlikely that pterodactyls live in Shropshire. What else could they have been ?

Grey Herons in flight can look very bulky, and have a primaeval, almost eerie jizz. Could these have been Grey Herons that had lost their feathers ? But what about the size ? With respect to the lady, there is one species of heron that could be mistaken for a pterodactyl – *ardea goliath*, the Goliath Heron.

This amazing bird lives in sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East. And it's *huge*. It has a wing-span of over seven feet. Although Afrotropical vagrants are very rare in the Western Palaearctic, they do occur (4). The Goliath Heron is reported from Israel (5). There is a problem though. Goliath Herons are very aquatic, even for herons, and are seldom found in areas of human disturbance. The chances of two of them turning up in a Shropshire country garden are very slim indeed.

However, they are sometimes kept in captivity. The closest collection to the U.K. to have owned them is the Safaripark Beekse Bergen in the Netherlands (6). Did two of their Goliath Herons cross the English Channel ? I'd love to think so. But there is a more likely explanation to all this – flying pterodactyl replicas. Yes, you did hear that correctly.

Courtesy of Youtube, you can watch one of these going through its paces at the 2016 Weston Park Model Air Show (7). It has a four foot wingspan, is bright green, and makes a phenomenal screeching racket. In what English county is this festival held ? You've got it – Shropshire ! Near Shifnal, to be precise. The same gathering took place in 2017, the year of the Whitchurch woman's sighting (8).

And pterodactyl model-making has been going on for some time. In 1986 a replica with an *18 foot* wingspan was given a test flight in Captain Beefheart territory in the Mojave Desert (9). More recently racing driver Casey Putsch has constructed something similar (10). It would make sense if Shropshire, which hosts the Weston Park jamboree, were a hotbed of pterodactylian replicators engaging in aerial dogfights over the pecking order… (Sorry. Terrible joke).

Of course, the creatures the woman saw in Whitchurch had more than four foot wingspans, by some way, and certainly weren't a ghastly luminous

shade of green ! How easily could two models of any size be operated side by side in formation ? And the Weston Park Model Air Show is held in June, not September…

I wish we knew who the lady was.

There is one other possible explanation that takes us closer to science fiction, physics or philosophy that to natural history. Was what happened a time slip ? Did the distant past and the present tangle together temporarily, like crossed wires in an old telephone exchange ? Maybe this accounts for all Fortean events, with Bigfoot, Nessie and pterodactyls coming from our past, and UFOs from our own far-distant future. But this is pure speculation, and how exactly it might work I couldn't begin to tell you.

I do know of one Shropshire resident who would have been intrigued by this: Peter Reading, a brilliant and very learned poet who died in 2011. He was a passionate ornithologist who was also interested in palaeontology. I suspect he'd have found the idea of pterodactyls in his home county hilarious.

References

(1) I recommend highly Roy Palmer's book *The Folklore of Shropshire* (2004).

(2) mysteriousuniverse.org/2019/11/bizarre-living-pterosaur-sightings-in-the-UK/

(3) livepterosaur.com/LP_Blog/archives/9067

(4) birdforum.net/threads/afrotropical-vagrants-reaching-wp.234254/

(5) heronconservation.org/herons-of-the-world/list-of-herons-goliath-heron/

(6) www.eznc.org

(7) Youtube.com/watch?v=AkR3ptR2aic

(8) shropshirestar.com/entertainment/2017/06/13/Weston-park-model-air-show-takes-off-this-month

(9) nytimes.com/1986/01/28/science/with-wings-flapping-model-pterodactyl-takes-to-air.html. See also latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1986-05-18-mn-20955-story.html

(10) Youtube.com/watch?v=9jznyzErE

Notes & Queries

Borneo babbler rediscovered after 170 years

Daily Telegraph February 26th 2021

"A bird last seen more than 170 years ago in the rainforests of Borneo has been rediscovered, amazing conservationists who long thought it was extinct. The black-browed babbler has only ever been documented once-described by scientists around 1848-eluding all subsequent efforts to find it.But late last year, two men in Indonesian Borneo saw a bird they did not recognise and took photos of it before releasing the palm-sized creature back into the forest, according to Global Wildlife Conservation…"

A Yellow King Penguin

There was widespread media coverage in February 2021 concerning a yellow coloured king penguin photographed in the island of South Georgia in the South Atlantic by Yves Adams. This was the first time a yellow (leucistic) king penguin had been captured on camera.

Mystery Beaver in Cornwall

The Sunday Telegraph

February 21st 2021

Wild Beaver sighting in Cornwall `a mystery`

"A wild beaver spotted at a tea plantation in Cornwall is thought to be the first seen since the animals were reintroduced in 2017.Workers saw the large rodent feeding on the bank of the River Fal on the Tregothnan estate ,near Truro, on Thursday...The Cornwall Beaver Project said that none of its beavers had been reported missing, adding that the sighting of the wild beaver was "a complete mystery".

Paul Screeton commented on Facebook that perhaps beavers had never become fully extinct in Britain.

Fireball in the vicinity of Cheltenham

I paper March 2nd 2021

Although Cheltenham is not mentioned in the following article from the I paper of March 2nd 2021, BBC News did mention that scientists had pin pointed an area near Cheltenham,Gloucestershire as the vicinity where the fire ball crashed to Earth.

`Meteor fireball was too fast to be space junk`.

"A fireball that lit up the skies over the UK is likely to have been a small piece of an asteroid entering the Earth`s atmosphere ,scientists say. The meteor was spotted on Sunday evening (February 28th-R) and sent a sonic boom across southern England,according to scientists from the UK Fireball Alliance(UKFall),led by staff at the Natural History Museum in London…"This particular piece of asteroid spent most of its orbit between Mars and Jupiter,though sometimes got closer to the Sun than Earth is."

Mystery Cats in Wales

Daily Telegraph February 26th 2021

Sightings of mystery big cat `must be investigated`

“Reports of a big cat nicknamed the Puma of Pontybodkin must be investigated by ministers before “someone is hurt or worse”, a Conservative politician has said.

Darren Millar said that a series of sightings of a mystery animal prowling the countryside in North Wales was a “real worry” that required urgent action from Lesley Griffiths,the Labour minister responsible for rural affairs,,,Mr Millar said:” It is a real worry that seven years on we are still getting reports of big cats being spotted here in North Wales. “A thorough investigation is therefore needed urgently before someone is hurt or worse…”

The Mugwump

(No this is not out of Harry Potter!)

Daily Public Ledger November 2nd 1897

A singular yellow animal was found, resembling a rabbit. The newspaper called it a Mugwump.

I found this definition of Mugwump on the Internet: “a person who remains aloof or independent, especially from party politics.”

Walrus on the coast of Ireland

https://www.livescience.com/walrus-sighting-ireland.html

March 15th 2021

“A walrus spotted on an Irish beach yesterday (March 14) may have floated there from the Arctic Circle after falling asleep on an iceberg.

A 5-year-old girl walking with her father spotted the blubbery newcomer.

The young girl, named Muireann, pointed out the walrus to her dad, Alan Houlihan, as they walked on Valentia Island in County Kerry. "I thought it was a seal at first, and then we saw the tusks," Houlihan said, according to IrishCentral. "He kind of jumped up on the rocks. He was massive. He was about the size of a bull or a cow, pretty similar in size; he's big, big."...The washed-up walrus seen on Valentia Island is thought to be quite young, based on the length of the animal's tusks, RTÉ reported. Full-grown walruses can grow tusks as long as 3.3 feet (1 meter), while the recently sighted walrus's tusks were roughly 12 inches (30 centimeters) long. The walrus's body measured more than 6 feet (2 m) from snout to tail”.

Mirko Thiessen Distribution of the walrus. Wikipedia Creative Commons

And a walrus turns up in Wales…

A walrus, supposedly the same one that turned up on the west coast of Ireland a few days previously, was sighted on the coast of Pembrokeshire,west Wales ,on March 21st-22nd ,see here:https://www.theguardian.com/science/2021/mar/22/mystery-of-the-walrus-spotted-on-rocks-on-the-welsh-coast:

“It probably is either from the east coast of Greenland or from Svalbard, one of those stocks,” said Lucy Babey, the head of science and conservation at the marine conservation charity Orca.

Babey said that while it was not yet certain whether the walrus spotted in Wales is the same mammal that was sighted the week before on rocks in County Kerry, Ireland, it is likely…”

Another British Fireball

Not long after the night time fire ball that fell in the vicinity of Cheltenham, came a day time fire ball that apparently fell into the Bristol Channel:

Rare 'daytime fireball' meteor that caused 'sonic boom' may have 'crashed into Bristol Channel' | Science & Tech News | Sky News March 22nd 2020

“A sonic boom-type explosion heard across France, Wales, and England this weekend has been tied to an extremely rare "daytime fireball" meteor believed to have crashed into the Bristol Channel.

The Ministry of Defence said that the noise - accompanied by a bright flash in the sky according to witnesses in France, England, Wales and even Jersey - was not caused by an RAF aircraft.

Experts who have analysed pictures and videos of this bright light have said that they believe it shows an extremely rare "daytime fireball", adding that the meteor must have been very large to have been visible at around 3pm…”

Ice eggs in a Norwegian pond

The Times

March 12th 2021

“Thousands of “ice eggs” ranging in size from golf balls to grapefruits have been found floating around the fringes of a Norwegian pond. The ovoid shapes are thought to be produced when chunks of ice break off and are worn smooth by the action of waves washing them against a beach...The ice eggs materialised in Follandsvatnet,on the island of Averoy,about a hundred miles southwest of Trondheim...Follandsvatnet,however,is barely 500m across at its widest extent, leaving experts puzzled as to how it could have given rise to waves powerful enough to sculpt the ice.”

Depiction of fish on a chair

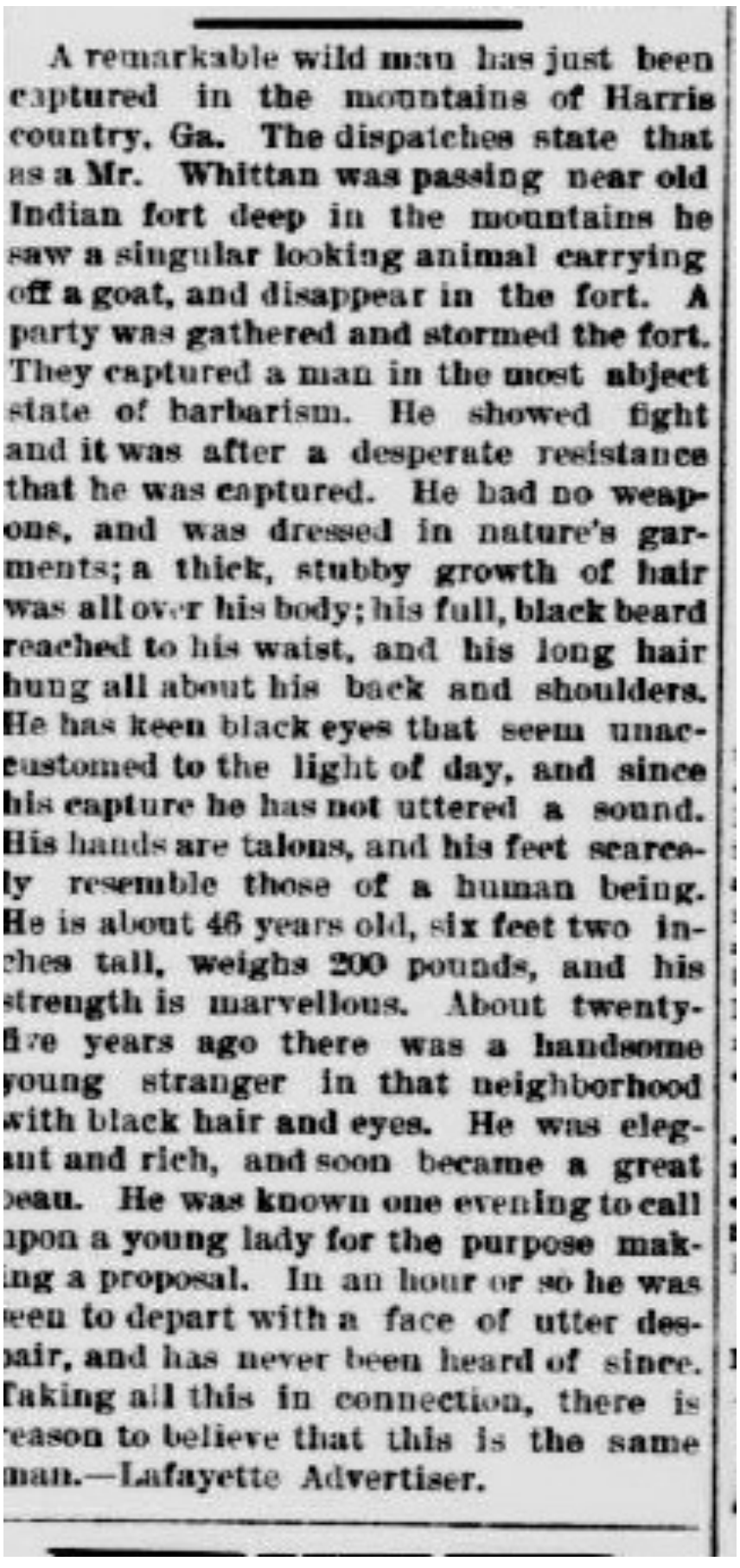
A friend passed on this photo to me of fish (if that is what they are) on a chair. But they look very much like Adaro. The **Adaro** were malevolent merman-like sea spirits found in the mythology of the Solomon Islands.

Adaro is a unique creature that lived in the Pacific Ocean. The Adaro is very dangerous. Said to arise from the wicked part of a person's spirit, which is divided between the Aunga (good) which dies, and the Adaro (evil) which stays as a ghost.[2] An adaro is described as a man with gills behind his ears, tail fins for feet, a horn like a shark's dorsal fin, and a swordfish or sawfish-like spear growing out of his head.[1] They may also travel in Jaratep or Daretep waterspouts and along rainbows and are said to kill unwary fishermen by firing flying fish at them.(1)

Georgia Wild Man

The Weekly Messenger (Louisiana)

June 16th 1888



A remarkable wild man has just been captured in the mountains of Harris country, Ga. The dispatches state that as a Mr. Whittan was passing near old Indian fort deep in the mountains he saw a singular looking animal carrying off a goat, and disappear in the fort. A party was gathered and stormed the fort. They captured a man in the most abject state of barbarism. He showed fight and it was after a desperate resistance that he was captured. He had no weapons, and was dressed in nature's garments; a thick, stubby growth of hair was all over his body; his full, black beard reached to his waist, and his long hair hung all about his back and shoulders. He has keen black eyes that seem unaccustomed to the light of day, and since his capture he has not uttered a sound. His hands are talons, and his feet scarcely resemble those of a human being. He is about 46 years old, six feet two inches tall, weighs 200 pounds, and his strength is marvellous. About twenty-five years ago there was a handsome young stranger in that neighborhood with black hair and eyes. He was elegant and rich, and soon became a great beau. He was known one evening to call upon a young lady for the purpose making a proposal. In an hour or so he was seen to depart with a face of utter despair, and has never been heard of since. Taking all this in connection, there is reason to believe that this is the same man.—Lafayette Advertiser.

1. https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adaro_(mythology)?fbclid=IwAR1hEkRfz92S5R-4rYG6MyB5wcpaBQNvZ2MrbuDoyTf9uqfGVt4yBwGsSBQ

"...Resembles a Giant Tad-pole..."

The Pioche Record (Nevada) November 7th 1919

Strange Fish

Venice,California. A strange fish approximately nine feet in length and consisting mostly of mouth, head and tail, is arousing much interest here. The freak monster was found on the beach by Frank Benedict, a city official.In the mouth of the fish were four rows of teeth. The eyes are as large as saucers. The creature resembles a giant tadpole.

American flying snake San Francisco Examiner 3-9-1911 Appears thanks to Peter van Doorn

AVIATORS, TAKE WARNING

Night Flier Says He Had Encounter With Aerial Serpent.

NEW YORK, September 2.—Frank Goodale, who flies his own airship nightly over Palisades Park, may go down into history as the discoverer of the air serpent. He came down a few nights ago with his hair on end and scared speechless.

When he recovered he said that at a height of two thousand feet he was attacked by a long green thing that had two great wings and seemed to come out of a cloud. He was saved by the search light that was trained on him, for the creature seemed to fear the light and retreated at once to his lair, wherever that was.

Cryptic New Species of Bumblebee Discovered in Rocky Mountains

http://www.sci-news.com/biology/bombus-incognitos-09532.html **April 8th 2021**

Thanks to Shane Lea for providing this story

"A research team led by Uppsala University scientists has sequenced and compared the genomes of a bumblebee species called *Bombus sylvicola* and a previously unidentified sister species living in sympatry in the Rocky Mountains, the United States... In the study, the researchers surveyed the genomic variation in *Bombus sylvicola* by whole-genome resequencing of 284 specimens from across the Rocky Mountains in Colorado.

Unexpectedly, these specimens fell into two distinct genetic clusters, revealing the presence of a previously unknown cryptic species living in sympatry with *Bombus sylvicola*, which the authors name *Bombus incognitus*…"

New species of spider in Miami

https://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/2021/04/15/zoo-miami-helps-discover-brand-new-spider-species-miami/ April 15th 2021

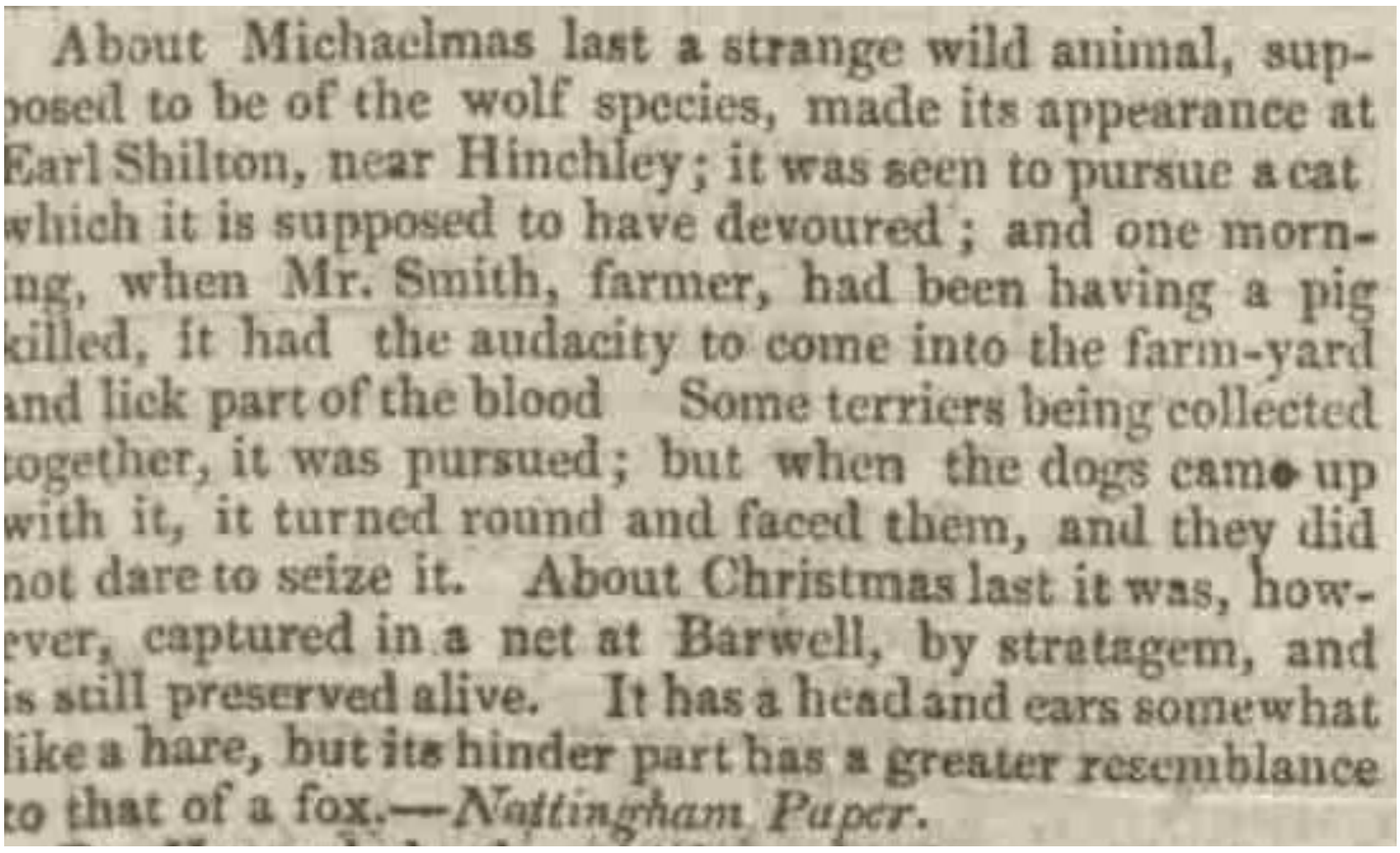
Thanks to Shane Lea

"MIAMI (CBSMiami) – Miami already has invasive snakes and iguanas and now it has a brand new species of spider, and it's a large spider too.

The spider was discovered by Zoo Miami staff in the critically endangered pine rockland forest surrounding the Zoo in Southwest Miami-Dade.The Pine Rockland Trapdoor Spider (*Ummidia richmond*) was first found by a zookeeper who was checking reptile research traps in 2012. The zookeeper shared the photo of the spider with the Zoo's Conservation and Research Department for identification, but it didn't match any existing records for known species in the region."

Part Hare part fox?

Hereford Journal February 12th 1823



About Michaelmas last a strange wild animal, supposed to be of the wolf species, made its appearance at Earl Shilton, near Hinchley; it was seen to pursue a cat which it is supposed to have devoured; and one morning, when Mr. Smith, farmer, had been having a pig killed, it had the audacity to come into the farm-yard and lick part of the blood Some terriers being collected together, it was pursued; but when the dogs came up with it, it turned round and faced them, and they did not dare to seize it. About Christmas last it was, however, captured in a net at Barwell, by stratagem, and is still preserved alive. It has a head and ears somewhat like a hare, but its hinder part has a greater resemblance to that of a fox.—*Nottingham Paper.*

Alligator in Trenton New Jersey

Grand Forks Daily Herald

May 17th 1901

One is fished out of the River Which Flows Through the Center of the Town

Catching alligators is not common amusement in Trenton,N.J., but one was caught the other day in Assapink creek, which makes its way through the center of the town. A boy playing in the stream near where it flows under Bond street spied something that looked like a big lizard on a water soaked log. He was frightened and called to Chief Engineer Purdy of the Trolley road, who happened to be near. Purdy investigated and found that the lizard was an alligator three feet long.He got a rope and a pole and managed to slip a noose over the body of the reptile, and after a hard struggle he handled it. How the alligator managed to get into the creek is a mystery.

Tail of a Rattle Snake

This photograph and text is © Simon Mawdsley

Hi Rich this was given to me in 1992 by a guy in New Mexico called George Schultz. A friend and I met him in a Dunkin Donuts in Santa Fe , New Mexico and we stayed with him and his partner in the desert for 3 days. They had escaped from the rat race in new York to become New Age hippies living in the desert ,they were a really great couple, took us to Albuquerque to buy cowboy hats although I didn't by one but George did. See above the rattle snakes tail he gave me ,it is still intact although a very delicate item.

New amphibious centipede species discovered in Okinawa and Taiwan

Eureka Alert! 17 April 2021 Thanks to Shane Lea

https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2021-04/tmu-nac041421.php

Tokyo, Japan - Researchers from Tokyo Metropolitan University and Hosei University have discovered a new species of large, tropical centipede of genus *Scolopendra* in Okinawa and Taiwan. It is only the third amphibious centipede identified in the world, and is the largest in the region, 20 cm long and nearly 2 cm thick. It is also the first new centipede to be identified in Japan in 143 years, testament to the incredible biodiversity of the Ryukyu Archipelago.

LETTERS TO FATE

Thanks to Gary Mangiacopra for this information

Volume 12,Number 3,Issue Number 108,March 1959

OBJECT OF BEAUTY

Charles Van Every

Detroit,Michigan

In September,1955,as a favor,I drove two elderly persons to Louisville,Kentucky.They had purchased a car here and did not feel up to making the long drive home. As we passed through Indiana-near Muncie,I think, we sighted a most beautiful glowing object which seemed to hover a few feet off the ground.

As I was driving 60 m.p.h. I could not stop immediately. However,I braked the car sharply. To our amazement the object, which was circular and huge, was moving away so swiftly and silently that it became a mere pinpoint of brilliance in which I estimate to be under three seconds. It was a clear autumn day. Visibility was unlimited.

The most striking thing about the object was its unearthly radiant beauty. It glowed like pure crystal. I have given this experience much thought and am convinced that the object had an extraterrestrial origin. Nothing of earth could have duplicated its feat. I also am convinced that an object so beautiful must be the product of a beautiful civilization.

Volume 12,Number 4,Issue Number 109,April 1959

FROM THE SKY

Bill Williams, a columnist for the Gastonia,North Carolina Gazette,reports the strange experience of Mr and Mrs Basil McGee of 1005 Woodland Drive.

The McGees were watering their lawn and shrubs one day in October;the sun was shining and the skies were clear, with a few lazy white clouds drifting by.

Mrs McGee was leaning on her rake, admiring the sky and fleecy clouds, and Mr McGee was working near the edge of the lawn. As Mrs McGee watched, a glittering “something” came streaking out of the sky and landed in the west leaves between the shrubs.

She went over to investigate , pulled the branches aside and then called her husband. There, cradled in the leaves, was a shiny two-franc French coin.

No! No airplanes were flying overhead!

HYPNOTIZED BY THE SNAKE

Irwin G.Yarbrough

Napa, California

Next door to where I live is a Mrs Mabel States. This friendly little lady spends endless hours each day working in her flower garden and with the plants around her home. Recently she told me of a strange experience that she had when moving from Estervan,Canada (on the Montana border) to a homestead she had acquired in North Dakota.

She had hired a deliveryman to move some things from a millinery shop she owned to the new location,22 miles away. They were driving along with a team of horses and a loaded wagon, when her attention was attracted to a bird circling in the air about 30 feet from the ground and screeching wildly. As it circled it dropped lower each time and made smaller orbits. She asked the man to stop and they watched. At this point the man saw a snake standing up like a stick, with most of its body off the ground, and its head glued to

the movements of the bird. In a short time the bird was within striking distance of the snake, which lashed out and caught its prey.

I wonder if anyone else ever had a similar experience. Many items have come to my attention relative to thought transference, some with a hypnotic angle, between persons, between man and animals, but I do not know whether it exists between animals.

Volume 12,Number 7,Issue number 112 July 1959

ALCOHOL IN THE BODY

Wm. Constantine
Louiseville,Kentucky

A letter in a recent issue of FATE stated it is possible for the human body to store up enough alcohol to render it of an explosive nature. I took this to mean it is possible for a person so saturated as to be burned to a cinder from this cause and this cause alone.

Well, although I like your magazine and always buy a copy each month, this was a little too much to swallow. I wrote to the dean of a certain medical school, posing this question. His reply, which was quite lengthy, served to confirm my doubts regarding the letter.

The dean`s opinion, briefly stated, is that it is absolutely impossible for the human body to store up alcohol in sufficient quantity to cause an explosion by normal means-i.e lighting a cigarette. Furthermore,it would not be possible for a human being to live with a sufficient amount of alcohol to induce this condition.

I can only conclude that the nineteenth century doctors mentioned in the letter must have been very stupid. I feel that your staff should investigate matters fully before publishing them as fact.

Volume 12,Number 3, Issue number 108,March 1959

CATFISH FROM HEAVEN

“The proof of the pudding is in the eating” , they always say. That was true of the fish that fell in our yard.

In the Spring of 1918 we were living in the 800 block on Kentucky Avenue in Lawrence,Kansas.That was the year we ate a catfish from the sky.

There had been a mid-afternoon rainstorm with a great deal of wind from the southwest. The storm, as I remember it, was unusually severe. The water in the street overflowed the curbing and lay an inch deep or more over the yard. We stood at the front door watching it. Mother,Dad and I.

My father, the Rev.Joseph Barricklow, ran out across the porch to measure the water in the yard. Stooping off the low porch he put his thumb at waterlevel on the yardstick. While he was stooping there, Mother and I saw something fairly large land out in the yard. We both shouted in the same breath,” What`s that?”

Dad looked up and asked, “Where?”

We pointed toward something floundering several feet out in the yard. Dad shouted,”It`s a fish!” and went after it. Mother warned him,”You`ll be wet to the skin!” but he replied,”I`m wet already,” and went on after the fish. He reached for it but the fish flopped out of his reach and he waded on.

Realizing it would be next to impossible for him to capture and hold it with his hands, Mother told me to go after the big kettle and be sure to bring the lid.

When I returned with the big kettle and lid Dad had chased the fish toward the porch. He reached up and took the kettle from me. Then holding the kettle on edge he let the fish flounder into it, then quickly righted the kettle and popped the lid on.

Dad handed the kettle to Mother and she and I went to the kitchen while he waded around to the backporch where he took off most of his wet clothes before coming into the house. Mother held the kettle under the tap and I ran water enough to cover the fish. It was a catfish such as I have caught in Kansas

waters more than once– a big catfish measuring over 20 inches and weighing two and a half pounds.

In our excitement we forgot about the rain and tried to explain to each other this fish-from-heaven. Dad suggested that a draft of wind must have taken the fish up from the Kaw River,which ran through the north end of town, and carried it into the air, whence it had landed in our front yard. However,there was no report of a tornado in the area that afternoon and the wind was blowing toward the river instead of away from it. We were all of a mile and a half from the river at its nearest point which was beyond Mt. Oread (Kansas University site),so the fish would not only have had to travel a mile and a half through the air but would have had to be carried several hundred feet upward to have reached our front yard from the Kaw River. And on this day it would have travelled against surface winds.

Yet it landed in our yard alive and with a good deal of fight in it. It must have taken Dad at least 10 minutes to land it in our kettle.

At any rate, we ate it and it tasted just like a good catfish should taste, neither more nor less heavenly!

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FROGS RAINED ON BUDAPEST

On April 1,1958,it was reported that thousands of frogs fell on Budapest,Hungary,during a freak thunderstorm. The explanation given for the phenomena was that during the storm strong currents of air sucked up frogs from shallow pools of water and that they were dropped over the city when the force of the currents was spent.

Volume 12,Number 12,Issue number 117,December 1959

LION-HEARTED LAMB

Hearing an unusual noise, farmer Norman Hosking of Penzance,England,peered out of his cottage window. He saw a fox trying to carry off a turkey. Billy, a four-month-old lamb, charged the fox, which fled and left the turkey behind.

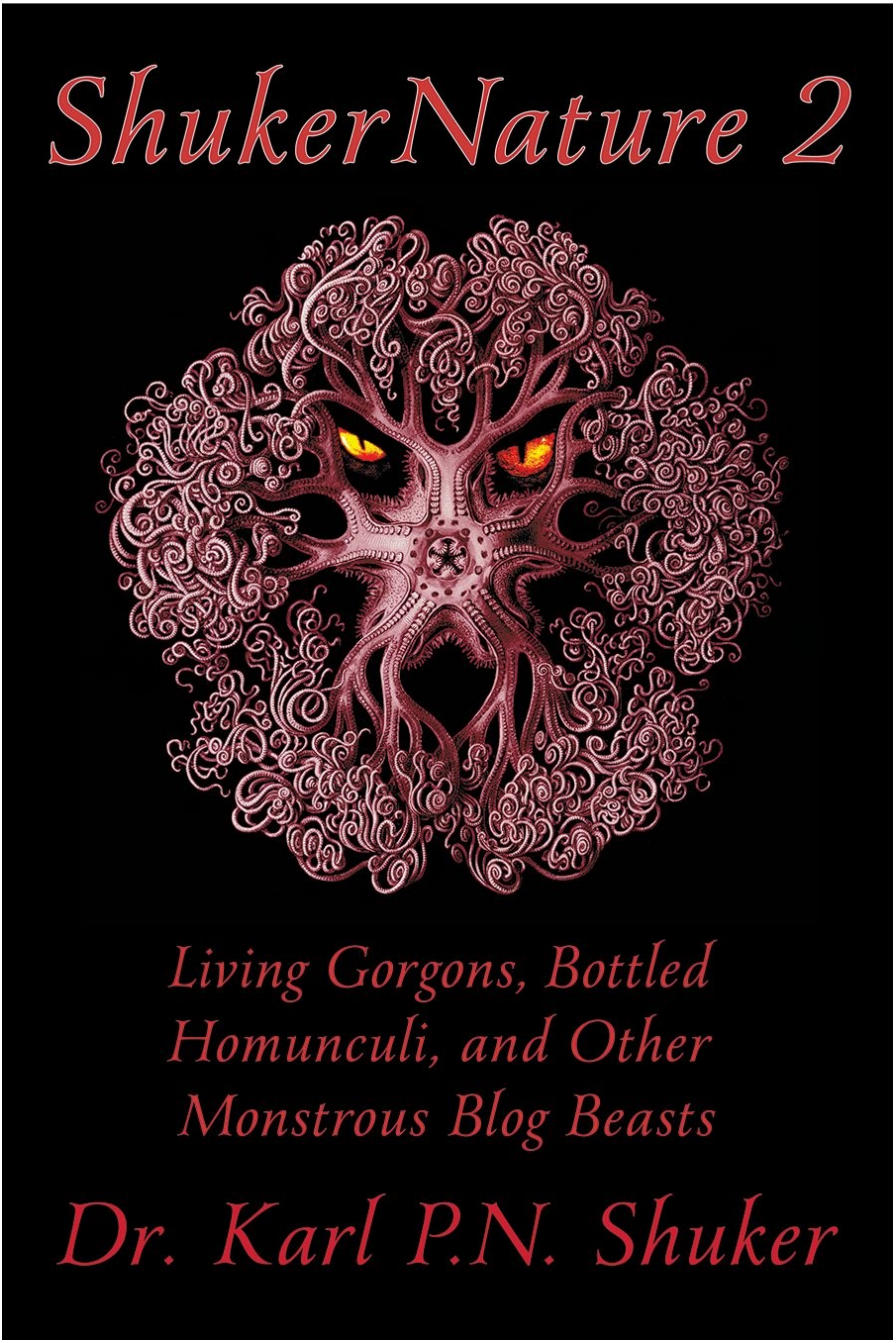
Volume 12,number 3,Issue number 108,March 1959

THE PHANTOM CYCLIST

A Ghostly cyclist who appears to haunt a certain spot along a road called the Kingsway recently was reported in the Dundee,Scotland edition of the People`s Journal.

In the late fall of 1956 Edward Meakin,director of a Dundee firm called the Forfar Company,was driving east to Dundee along the Kingsway after taking his sister-in-law, Sheila Roger,to her home in Invergowrie. It was shortly after 11:00 P.M. and it was raining. As Meakin peered into the path of his headlights he saw what appeared to be an old man on a bicycle cross the road and disappear into a side road. Several days later Meakin passed the spot in daylight and was surprised to note that there was no side road where he had seen the cyclist. The road at that point was hemmed in on both sides by quite high grassy green banks. One night some 18 months later Meakin was driving his sister-in-law to his home in Dundee where she was to stay with his wife. Again he saw what appeared to be an old man on a bicycle cross the road approximately 100 feet ahead of the car. Miss Roger saw the figure also and asked where it had gone.

Meakin said he was certain that the figure was the same one he had seen on the previous occasion. He added that the sighting had occurred at the same spot along the Kingsway and at the same time-shortly after 11:00 PM. The figure, he said, seemed to float across the road in a bent position as if hunched over bicycle handlebars. According to Miss Roger,the figure wore a cap and the bicycle wheels looked like circles of smoke.



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